

AN ANALYSIS OF THE AUGUST WAR: A CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

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PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE AUGUST WAR: A CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

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The objective of the thesis is to present an alternative analytical framework on the reasons for the 2008 Russia-Georgia War. Throughout the scholarly literature, the conflict has been construed through extensive reference to the great power politics reminiscent of the Cold War. Instead, the research utilized a methodological framework designed through the guideline of constructivism to provide an analysis cognizant of the dimensions and actors, mostly overlooked in the contemporary literature or analyzed in a scattered and disassociated manner. In line with the constructivist emphasis on identity, the research focuses on the interaction among actors in both the international and domestic realm to discover the ideational determinants of conflict. For this purpose, the thesis conducted an ‘agent-structure debate’ to underline the mutually constitutive nature of human agents and system structures. Moreover, the debate is pursued to justify the intentional disregard for the ‘level of analysis problem’. The international aspect of the interaction is explored through the historical narrative to establish the causes of the mutual distrust between

Georgia and Russia, as well as Georgia and her minority communities, i.e., South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In order to discover the domestic determinants, the research analyzed the ways the leaders construct and utilize the ideational discourses within the domestic structural limitations. In that sense, the beliefs and personalities of the national elites and domestic structural constraints they faced established analytical focus. The examination of the domestic dynamics focuses on their evolving perspectives towards the West as a shared but conflicting aspect of the relations between Russia and Georgia

Keywords: August War, Constructivism, Russian Foreign Policy, Georgian Foreign Policy, South Ossetia

ÖZ

AĞUSTOS SAVAŞININ ANALİZİ: KONSTRÜKTİVİST BİR YAKLAŞIM

SÜREK, Çağrı

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü

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Tezin amacı, 2008 Rusya-Gürcistan çatışmasının nedenleri üzerine alternatif bir analitik çerçeve sunmaktır. Akademik literatürde bu çatışma, Soğuk Savaş'ı anımsatan büyük güç politikalarına atıfla yorumlanmaktadır. Alternatif olarak araştırma, çoğunlukla literatürde görmezden gelinen ya da dağınık ve bağlantısız bir şekilde analiz edilen boyutların ve aktörlerin bilincinde bir analiz sağlamak için konstrüktivist ilkeler doğrultusunda tasarlanmış, metodolojik bir çerçeve kullanılmaktadır. Konstrüktivist kimlik vurgusuna paralel olarak araştırma, çatışmanın düşünsel/fikirsal etkenlerini ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla hem uluslararası hem de yerel alandaki aktörler arasındaki etkileşime odaklanmıştır. Bu amaçla, tez, insan unsuru ve sistem yapılarının karşılıklı kurucu doğasını vurgulamak için bir 'amil-yapı tartışması' yürütmüş, ayrıca bu tartışmayı 'analiz düzeyi' sorunsalının kasıtlı olarak göz ardı edilmesini meşrulaştırmak için kullanılmıştır. Etkileşimin uluslararası yönü, Gürcistan ve Rusya'nın yanı sıra Gürcistan ve azınlık toplulukları arasındaki karşılıklı güvensizliğin nedenlerini ortaya çıkarmak için tarihsel anlatı yoluyla araştırılmıştır. Ülke içi etkenleri belirlemek amacıyla liderlerin düşünsel söylemlerini yerel yapısal sınırlamalar dahilinde inşa etme ve kullanma yollarını analiz etmiştir. Bu anlamda,

ulusal seçkinlerin inançları ve kişilikleri ile karşılaştıkları sistemsel kısıtlamalar analitik bir odak oluşturmaktadır. Ülke içi dinamiklerin incelenmesi, Rusya ve Gürcistan arasındaki ilişkilerin ortak ancak birbiriyle ters yönde hareket eden bir paydası olarak batı kimliğine yönelik değişen tutumlarına odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ağustos Savaşı, Konstrüktivizm, Rus Dış Politikası, Gürcistan Dış Politikası, Güney Osetya

To my family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DRG	Democratic Republic of Georgia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PfP	Partnership for Peace Program
TcFSSR	Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Russia-Georgia War of 2008, i.e., the Five-Day-War, had a far more profound impact on world politics for a war of its span and magnitude. Asmus (2010, 10) identifies it as “the greatest crisis of the European security since [...] ethnic cleansing in the Balkans in the 1990s”. Although several reasons, from geopolitics to energy politics, could be enlisted for the attained importance of the war, it was the global meaning adhered within the context of post-Cold War order that made the war pivotal. The conflict shifted into a reminiscence of an admonition of renewed Cold War structure of bipolar power politics.

As Georgia had been developing closer relations with the European Union and the United States following its independence, the war was construed through Russia`s effort to secure her sphere of influence and feeble, if not non-existent, challenge to this effort by the US and the EU. Although this concern with the world order was quite existent and that was what made this “Little War” so crucial globally, such a focus led to analysis fixate extensively on this global dimension and bipolar power politics and neglect auxiliary dimensions and actors. Besides, such a perspective centralizing global power politics naturally exhibited itself in a realist theoretical framework. However, the prevalence of realism was not merely due to the inherent nature of the analysis. As argued by Gachechiladze (2014, 93), the fact that Russia could invade a weak neighbor with impunity at a time of prevalent international community and certain legal principles proved the endurance of realism. The

war, by the nature of analysis and interpretation of the outcome, served as an accolade of realism.

In that sense, it is the objective of the research to provide a comprehensive analysis of the war that is cognizant of the dimensions and actors, mostly overlooked in the contemporary literature or analyzed in a scattered and disassociated manner, without disdaining the above-mentioned global framework. In trying to encompass different determinants from various levels of analysis, the study will be more akin to the constructivist perspective. Constructivism not only enables one to encompass different determinants and levels of analysis but also peruse these determinants along with their meanings for the actors.

The analysis intends to benefit from constructivism`s focus on the socialization and mutual identification of actors. For constructivism, unlike mainstream rationalist traditions, states` identity and interest, hence the structure of world politics, are not pre-determined but shaped through social interaction between states (da Silva Bezerra 2019, 16). "Constructivism [...] assumes that selves, or identities of states are variable; they likely depend on historical, cultural, political, and social context" (Hopf 1998). Such a perspective demands an inquiry of the processes of social interaction between states in order to be able to grasp the social meanings behind their actions in relation to their identity and interest. In that sense, all the determinants investigated throughout the research confer with reference to their importance in shaping this meaning in socialization and identification.

Historical background, for one such determinant, is examined not merely as introductory material or for narrative purposes but as an analytical framework providing the primary foundation for the processes of socialization for the actors. Historical experiences of states *vis a vis* each other; enmities, conflicts and, relations of domination, as well as harmonious relations, might define their perspective towards each other, thus probable perception of threat.

Examination of the Russia-Georgia war reveals that a similar relation is existent for the actors involved in the conflict. The question of why Russia perceived Georgian quest for westernization and liberalization as a threat to her geopolitical interests can only be acknowledged with reference to the established perceptions of the Cold War politics. Naturally, a similar logic was prevalent when it comes to the US foreign policy towards Russia. Kumar argues that the US followed a Cold-War containment mindset over Russia. Instead of dismantling or transforming it as a force in responding to the humanitarian crisis, the US used NATO in extending influence on Europe and Asia by incorporating post-Soviet states in order to prevent the emergence of Russia from becoming a potential threat. On the other side of the coin, Russia perceived this policy, hence naturally NATO expansion, as a threat to its security (2018, 220&221). In his famous Munich speech, Putin (2007) asserted Russia`s exasperation with the enlargement of NATO by entitling it as a serious provocation that curtails mutual trust.

Although the Cold War is undoubtedly a critical cornerstone of historical narrative, analysis solely based on the Cold War, or the great power politics, creates an analogous fallacy of which realist-minded studies are mostly culpable; that is, to limit the scope of analysis on the affairs of those significant powers hence ignoring other parties even if they are the primary actors of the episode. Such a fallacy is evident in the literature regarding the Russia-Georgia war, as the obsession with the great power politics and concerns regarding the revival of the Cold War lead to analysis that mostly overlooks Georgian concerns. Throughout the literature, Georgia`s role in the conflict is usually reduced to the arguments on why Georgia decided to get into a war with a superpower. South Ossetia and Abkhazia face a similar kind of disregard throughout the literature regarding the conflict. In order to be able to establish the stable images the actors hold for each other, it is necessary to put forward a narrative of bilateral relations, i.e., relations of harmony, conflict, dominance, etc.

In that sense, the history of the Cold War does not only provides a frame of reference for the superpower rivalry of the USSR and the US but also for the nature of bilateral relations between the USSR and Georgia as a Union Republic of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it would also be a fallacy to exclude South Ossetia and Abkhazia from any inquiry of the war. The war should be associated with the concerns and affairs of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, along with Georgia and Russia. The historical narrative must aim to explain the nature of the bilateral relations and how these actors have constructed the image and identity of other actors while trying to build their own identity.

Georgia's earlier experience of independence, i.e., the Democratic Republic of Georgia (DRG) that could survive only from May 1918 to February 1921 until it was finally invaded by the Soviet Union, is a crucial cornerstone in understanding the nature of the bilateral relationship. Moreover, as revealed by Matsaberidze (2014) meticulously, the experience of the DRG enables the research to grasp the emergent political structure of modern Georgia, as the latter intentionally matured into a continuation of the DRG. Nationalism comprises one of the most vital elements of continuation for Georgia that could be traced back to the DRG. Along with social democracy, nationalism served as one of the building blocks of the first republic. From the viewpoint of bilateral relations, opposition to Russian imperialism was a crucial ground for Georgian nationalism. Following the annexation into the Soviet Union, Georgian nationalism attained a greater ethnic focus due to the ethnicity policy of the Soviet Union.

Soviet ethnicity policy affected other nationalities in the Soviet Union in the same way, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia were no exception. In a short while, Georgian nationalism and South Ossetian and Abkhazian nationalisms attained a competitive character towards each other (Ramishvili and Chergoleishvili 2014). Broers emphasizes this precarious legacy of

institutional ethnic hierarchies over post-Soviet unitary nation-building projects and argues that, among all of the post-Soviet states, Georgia suffered most from conflicts between the unitary state ambitions and the reality of ethnic diversity (Broers 2004, 8).

The case of ethnic diversity is notably evident in the case of South Ossetia. Up to one-third of South Ossetia was ethnically Georgian, who opposed secessionist claims of South Ossetia. Georgia never perceived the republics as viable entities, for they had no history of independence and assumed that they could only survive on their own through Russian support (Bowker 2011, 199). However, Georgian nationalist ambitions and the quest for a unitary state comprising the two republics were the primary sustenance for their nationalist sentiments. While Georgia was expecting the republics to follow her through independence, the republics perceived the Georgian unitary state as a threat to the relative autonomy they had under the Soviet rule (Cheterian 2009, 157).

Though the research attributes great importance to the historical narrative due to its effect in the construction of identities, this effect is only meaningful as long as it is filtered through the role of leadership and domestic political structure in interpreting and even constructing the meanings. An analysis based solely on the analytical examination of events is bound to be limited to the assumption of rational choice and overlook the subjective aspect of meaning construction and decision making. Freire and da Vinha (as cited in; Simão 2012, 486) correspondingly argues;

The contribution of the constructivist schools, focusing on the role of perceptions, values and ideas in the making of foreign policy, is partly a rediscovery of the initial origins of FPA, which revolutionised the field by underlining the human factor.

From this viewpoint, even a rough examination of the changes in Russian foreign policy towards the West is illuminating for understanding the role of the leaders. By renouncing the ideological bases of the Soviet Union and ceasing the inherent antagonism with the West, Gorbachev altered the image

of the self *vis a vis* the other. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Boris Yeltsin, the first president of the Russian Federation, also followed pro-Western policies, marked by neoliberal transformation. It was only after Putin ascended to the power that Russian foreign policy towards the West circled back to cynicism, a change mostly associated with Putin`s personality and different attitude compared to his predecessors (da Silva Bezerra 2019, 22&23). This transformation in Russian foreign policy overlaps with transformation in her reaction to Georgian pro-Western foreign policy, evident in the case of the NATO enlargement. While Yeltsin displayed only feeble opposition to NATO enlargement stemming from domestic concerns as he did not consider the alliance as a threat and even pursued a pro-Western stance himself, Putin altered this pro-Western stance in favor of Euroasianism, hence opposing NATO enlargement for Russia as well as her neighbors (Asmus 2010, 68).

However, constructivist analysis is not necessarily limited to the individual level. It emphasizes the co-constitutive relations of agent and structure. While actors shape the material world through speech act, the recognition and the awareness of the meaning is forged within the social context they act (Simão 2012, 486). In that sense, domestic structures are necessary variables to be examined throughout the research through the possibilities and constraints they pose for the actors.

In light of the objectives listed above, the outline consists of five main sections. The next chapter aims to put forward an introduction of the utilized constructivist framework in relation to mainstream theories. The introduction mainly focuses on the ontological and epistemological debate in order to be able to explore the *middle ground* position of the perspective and associated variants of constructivism. Moreover, the debate enables the establishment of the analytical framework that justifies utilizing the theoretical perspective on the case study.

In light of the debate established in the theoretical introduction, the following section offers a methodological ground for the analysis of the case. The chapter develops an agent-structure debate in order to legitimize the denaturalization of the level of analysis problem. The debate is necessary considering the analytical structure of the research is based upon the historical narrative, the role of leaders, and domestic structures.

The fourth chapter examines the formation of the ideational dynamics of the conflict in relation to variables established in the methodological chapter. The historical narrative functions as the reflection of the international interaction, which constitutes the established images of the states *vis a vis* each other. The examination of the historical narrative is particularly crucial for the formation of the identities of Georgia, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia. While historical experiences of Georgia, starting from the invasion of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, created a nationalist framework with Russia as significant other, the nationalist identity of South Ossetia and Abkhazia was crystallized within the Soviet federal structure. Moreover, the fear of losing their autonomy following the independence of Georgia and Georgia's extensive references to unitary state and nationalism dictated the nature of their relations with Georgia.

The analysis of the leaders' belief system and the changes in the dominant perspective concerning national identity informs the changes in Russian foreign policy from Gorbachev to Putin. However, the belief system of the leaders alone does not explain the respective changes. That is mainly because the domestic structure of Russia has presented a divided picture in terms of their commitment to different ideational camps, which created difficulty in establishing a coherent foreign policy framework. In that sense, contrary to the structural explanations based on the continuation of the Cold War mentality, the dominant identity in Russian politics and foreign policy perspectives witnessed a pendulum-like shift throughout the post-Cold War era. On the other hand, the domestic structure and ideational framework that

informed the leaders presented a coherent picture of their commitment to westernization and nationalism. Hence, while the domestic structure and role of elites explain formation and change in Russia`s foreign policy in the post-Cold War period, the historical narrative, i.e., international interaction, is more effective in establishing the ideational framework of Georgia, rather than the leaders and domestic structure.

Lastly, as the objective of the research is to present an essential debate concerning the nature of the conflict, the concluding chapter aims to connect the ideational foundations established through the theoretical and methodological framework with the dynamics and causes of the conflict. In line with the debate, the concluding chapter would hold this debate in relation to mainstream approaches to the conflict in order to clarify the alternative framework demonstrated throughout the preceding chapters.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK; CONSTRUCTIVISM

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the Five-Day-War between Georgia and Russia epitomized the revitalization of the realist analysis in the post-Cold War period. Along with other geopolitical concerns and energy politics, the war was chiefly associated with Russia's desire to secure her sphere of influence while Georgia, as a crucial post-Soviet state, was establishing closer relations with the West. Hence the scholarly literature revealed an extensive level of reference to the structural power politics in general and the renewed Cold War structure of bipolar power politics, in particular. The ineffectiveness of the US and especially the EU responding to the conflict or defending Georgia further blessed the realist perspective.

The general utilization of the realist perspective is due to the apparent consonance of realism with analyses of conflict and credible strength, particularly in the case of the Russian-Georgia War of 2008. However, the extensive focus on the great power politics led to analysis cognizant of the different dimensions and actors.

With those shortcomings of the existing analysis in mind, the objective of the research is to advance an alternative perspective for the analysis of the conflict. In this respect, the constructivist perspective might provide the necessary framework for the alternative way of analysis, which is perceptive of these shortcomings. On the other hand, the research intends to serve as an application of the constructivist perspective on a case study. The locus of theoretical debate regarding constructivism is generally on ontology and epistemology with few case study applications. Admitting the importance of

the ontological and epistemological discussions, the paucity of case study applications resulted in an image of an abstract theory with no practical value.

Moreover, the ontological and epistemological 'via media' -the middle ground-position of constructivism and different variants emanated from the differences concerning ontological and epistemological positions, which will be discussed in detail, also led to ambiguity in constructivism's role in creating a consistent analytical perspective. However, it is equally possible to perceive this divergence in the theoretical foundations as a prospect of a flexible analytical structure that enables the settlement of a research framework. Hence, prior to the formation of such an analytical framework for the case study at hand, the chapter aspires to settle itself into this flexible and divergent structure.

Besides, in the attainment of this endeavor, insights from 'foreign policy analysis' are accommodated into the research design along with the constructivist perspective. It arises from the argument that FPA is congruent with constructivism and might also be ancillary in its utilization for a case study. The strategy is to benefit from FPA's acumen for general policy-making processes for the inquiry of decisions of the actors through the case at hand. In other words, the primary function for the integration of FPA into the constructivist perspective for the examination of a specific case stems from the need to carry the locus of inquiry to agents, as the constructivist perspective inclines towards structural and holistic arguments, a tendency shared throughout the divergent variants.

However, anterior to all these discussions regarding the application to a case study, it is necessary to provide a general introduction of constructivism. Hence, a general definition, genealogy, and a sketchy introduction to the philosophical and sociological roots of the perspective naturally base the foremost part of the outline of the chapter. This part is followed by the exploration of the pervasive ontological and epistemological debate, and

disparate variants stemmed from the debate. Although this debate establishes the core of the constructivist perspective, the scope of the argument will be kept at the introductory level, as a detailed and extensive inquiry is beyond the aim and the scope of the research. Rather than languishing in the vast literature of debate with the interminable objective of concluding an outcome, the objective of reference to the debate is to position the analysis within constructivism by juxtaposing it through the variants of constructivism established via ontological and epistemological debate. Naturally, with this objective in mind, the outline of the chapter follows with the study of the variants. While the paramount difference among the variants, mainly branded as conventional and critical, is built upon the ontological and epistemological debate, further classifications in the literature will also be reviewed.

The chapter follows this constituent argument regarding the nature of constructivism with a more detailed analysis concerning mainstream International Relations theories. Besides the general introduction of the theoretical framework, the comparative analysis would provide a necessary emphasis on the distinctive points contributed by the constructivist perspective. Hence this section characterizes the nature of the perspective through its peculiar position regarding materialism, rational choice, the prospect of change, power, and interest. By determining the constructivist viewpoint compared to mainstream theories, precisely realism, it would be possible to put forward a more comprehensive framework and arrange the cornerstones of the challenges presented by constructivism. Thus, leaving all the queries about whether constructivism is a theory aside, this part also functions as an analytical leveler for constructivism by working on the same concepts with the mainstream theories as well as embedding new ones to the analysis, if necessary.

Aside from providing a general introduction to constructivism, another query to be held ahead of the case study analysis is to validate how constructivism

is put in use within the scope of the research and how it is utilized for the case. In light of the ontological and epistemological debate mentioned beforehand, another immediate requirement is to define the ontological and explicitly epistemological ground the analysis settles. The inquiry aims to reveal ontological and epistemological grounds of the analysis conducted in further chapters and justify the methodology integrated into the constructivist perspective. Although the main framework of the analysis is established through the insights from constructivism, stark differences and different variants make it necessary to specify the empirical ground through the existing literature.

In this section, the argument of the research would deviate from Wendt's structural emphasis and base its empirical ground on a rather agent-centered perspective with a perspective akin to FPA. Agency is not directly sidelined from the theoretical content Wendt pursued. On the contrary, Wendt recognized the role agency played as the bearers of the subjectivity in the construction of world politics. However, this role attributed to the agency is to provide an alternative perspective for a better grasp of international structure. Wendt deliberately puts forward a distinction between international politics and foreign policy and reserve analytical concern with the former (A. Wendt 1999, 11). Hence the evasion mentioned here is not an ontological one but reflective of an intentional choice based on analytical purposes Wendt had. Contrarily, the objective of the research is to have an investigation more akin to foreign policy analysis in its inquiry of the decision-making processes leading to the conflict. Naturally, parallel to the analytical concern at hand, the emphasis would rather be on analyzing agents' decision-making processes than international politics.

A similar omission engaged in Wendt's theorizing is about the non-state actors. Despite his acceptance of "important, even decisive, effect" of transnational or domestic actors, states are considered to be the "primary medium through which the effects other actors[...]channeled into the world

system" (A. Wendt 1999, 9). As the analytical focus here is these very effects and the processes through which they are channeled into the system, the examination would integrate non-state actors, both domestic and international, into the analytical framework.

Naturally, the acclaimed issue of 'level of analysis' is the chief foundation to be discussed. The inquiry here is beyond the renowned agent-structure debate but of a more intricate 'level of analysis' dialogue, for even the general tendency in the constructivist perspective is to hold state as the sole established actor. Hence by focusing on the 'level of analysis' issue, the objective is to challenge the role of the state as the established actor for the analyses. Through the inquiry of level of analysis, the locus of examination could be carried into a perspective that contains domestic variables like national bureaucracy, elites, state-society relations, and their role concerning dynamics related to state and the international structure. In that sense, it is necessary to acknowledge that the objective is not to overrule or ignore state or international structure as variables, for it would be an incoherent attempt considering the mutual constitution of actors and structures is widely accepted as a part of constructivist ontology (Adler 2002). The objective here is to deconstruct the state as the exclusive agent in the 'agent-structure' debate. Thus, aside from establishing a roadmap for the analysis of the conflict, the section pursues a more advanced purpose of justification for the partial abrogation of the 'level of analysis' concern.

Attaining a more significant role to the internal processes and actors than existed in the constructivist literature for analytical purposes might carry the risk of deviating from the essence of the perspective and taking a more neoclassical realist outlook. However, the research intends to conserve the core of the constructivist perspective by retaining the essential focus on identities and creation and diffusion of ideas and norms. However, while the attention in the dominant stream is on the international structure, the research integrates domestic processes without necessarily diminishing the role of

international. Whereas the methodology might relate to the neoclassical realism in its focus on domestic processes and national elites as well as of insights from the FPA, the malleable nature of identities and the active role attained to the domestic processes and actors in the creation and diffusion of norms and ideas enacts profound divergences from neoclassical realism that treats such variables as given and assigns them at best a restrictive role. While this restrictive role of domestic and international structure is appreciated in the proposed methodology, the analysis is found upon the assertion that the formation and malleable nature of these variables should also be regarded as subjects of analysis. Nonetheless, the research has a more congruent approach with neoclassical realism regarding decision-making processes and particularly its perspective towards the assumption of 'rational choice.' As the study regards actors as one of the primary loci of inquiry, it is necessary to clarify its position towards the roadmap for analysis of decision-making processes. In simplest terms, the assumption of rational choice is eluded due to its acquiescence of not only the domestic and international structural restrictions as acknowledged by neoclassical realism as the main ground for its challenge to classical or structural realism but also through a recognition of non-material dynamics like identities.

Lastly, the inclusion of non-material dynamics to the empirical structure requires an examination of the ways they affect decision-making processes. Nevertheless, the analysis remains flawed unless the study performs an inquiry of the formation of these identities of self and other. As also mentioned throughout the introductory chapter, the historical narrative is regarded in the study as a crucial part of the empirical framework rather than functioning as a preface for the case study. In other words, the study claims that actors' perception of the self and other is shaped through historical narrative and mutual experiences. Such a perspective naturally focuses on variables like historical traumas, long-standing enmities, relations of domination, and national identity. Within this historical framework, the study would refrain from viewing the actors as just passive interpreters of these dynamics; on the

contrary, the study would attain actors' active role in the construction of images and identities.

2.1. The Outline of Constructivism

Constructivism is not a well-defined sociological approach. Terms such as constructivism, constructionism, and constitutiveness are frequently used in different branches of social sciences and are, unfortunately, used by different people to describe different things (Palan 2000, 579).

Young & Collin attempts to clarify the differences among the terms constructivism, social constructionism, and social constructivism to prevent generic and undifferentiated use of the term under the general brand of 'constructivism'¹. While constructivism is distinguished with its emphasis on the individual, cognitive processes in meaning-making, and constructing the social and psychological world, social constructionism and social constructivism share a common focus on social processes and interaction (2004, 374&375).

The term constructivism cultivated various definitions stemming not only from the different variants within but also from the level of theory the definition represents. To use a widely cited definition by Adler;

Constructivism is the view that *the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world*[emphasis in original] (Adler 1997, 322).

However, in another piece, Adler (2002) analyzes the term within a three-layered understanding of metaphysics, social theory, and IR theory and research strategies. Palan distinguishes it as an epistemological position stemmed from Kant's theory of synthetic knowledge, which rejects the direct

¹ Although the use of the term 'social constructivism' rather than generic 'constructivism' would be more appropriate considering the emphasis on the social processes and mutual construction, the terminological variances are less distinctive for researches that are strictly within the scope of International Relations in which the generic term 'constructivism' is commonly used interchangeably with the inherent reference to the social processes. In that regard, the analysis will follow with generic use, though with acknowledgement of the necessary distinction.

grasp of an objective reality/knowledge independent from subjects' cognitive(biological and psychic) properties (2000, 579).

Zehfuss associates the problem of definition with the lack of agreement on what is put under the banner of constructivism. Whereas some identified it with any non-mainstream/non-rationalist approach, others held a far more specific attitude by employing it with reference to an exclusive variant. Moreover, as a result of the intellectual divergence within, any attempt to define the constructivist perspective falls short of providing for the intellectual diversity (2002, 6&7). Appreciating the differences among different strands of constructivism, Checkel (2008, 72) adopts an approach focusing alternatively on what unites all constructivists; that is, the assertion of a socially constructed world with the invested attention to social forces as opposed to material ones. Similarly, Finnemore&Sikkink (2001, 392) discloses the social forces by reciting constructivist focus on "the role of ideas, norms, knowledge, culture, and argument in politics, stressing, in particular, the role of collectively held or intersubjective ideas and understanding on social life." Constructivists are, thus, distinguished with their emphasis on social dimensions of international relations, granting importance to norms, rules, and language. By this token, the idea of social construction embraced differences in the social context in both temporal and spatial sense, hence opposing the idea of a single objective reality. This defiance of single objective reality also stemmed from the active role allotted to the agency in the construction of the international reality as well as to the processes of interaction causing historically, culturally, and politically distinct realities; contrary to the over-determination of structure found in neorealist and neoliberal theory (K.M. Fierke 2013, 189). Correspondingly, Kratochwil (2015, 17) points out the shared assumption of the constructivist research programs that the world outside is not a given or independent natural existence but rather a human artifice; that is, construction through the interaction of actors. Onuf, who coined the term 'constructivism' in his *World of Our Making*, expresses that

one may not begin with facts as they are social constructions created by human interaction (N. G. Onuf 2012).

Another common concern among the constructivists and the basis of its peculiar prominence is their convergence around the concept of *identity*. Along with the other non-material dynamics, the interest in the concept constitutes a crucial pillar for constructivist analysis. Constructivists challenge the empirical and explanatory agenda of the international relations theory, particularly the analytical limits of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism, by accommodating states' identities and interests in affecting international politics. In this regard, constructivists advance constitutive rules along with the regulative ones and uncover the transformative potential (Ruggie 2003, 27).

In his analysis of Wendt's approach to identity, Ross argues that Wendt uses identity to create a dynamic for intentionality by means of ideas they have about themselves and about a given situation; and utilize it to generate motivational and behavioral dispositions. Hence, through identity, Wendt places intentionality at the locus of social interaction (2006, 205&206). In a more direct fashion, Hopf (1998, 193) underlines the politics of identity in the constructivist analysis by arguing that;

it proposes a way of understanding how nationalism, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, and sexuality, and other intersubjectively understood communities, are each involved in an account of global politics.

Nevertheless, as the world outside is not pre-given and natural for constructivism, so is the nature of identity. Identities and interests for the constructivist perspective are not stable and given; thus, the vocation is to investigate the ways they are constructed through international interaction (Weber 2010, 62). In this regard, it is not only the mutual interaction between specific actors, even though they naturally constitute decisive component with relevance to the examination of a particular event or conflict between the actors in question, the underlying concern of the constructivists with identity

"is one of bringing the social back into the discipline that has been undersocialized" (Wiener, 2003, p.256, as cited in; K.M. Fierke 2013, 193).

The reason why the research integrated historical narrative as an essential part of the empirical framework is to discover the impact of international interaction has on identity and have a grasp on the motivational and behavioral dispositions through the intentionality framework that is associated with identity in the constructivist perspective. It stems from the realization that international interaction, in one way or another, shall be placed at the center of any analysis containing identity. Ruggie instructs that despite the concession among constructivists about the role of internal dynamics on the characterization of state identity, it is commonly regarded as the product of mutual construction stemming from conveyed differences, hence signifying the role of *other* through interaction (2003, 24).

Although social interaction is a central dynamic in the construction of the identities of the states, the direction of causality between social interaction and identities is somewhat interchangeable. As the social interaction among actors has a constitutive effect on defining images of self and other, the perceptions of actors about others and themselves impact the nature of the relations. By defining the images of the self and other, "identities strongly imply a particular set of interests or preferences with respect to choices of action in particular domains, and with respect to particular actors" (Hopf 1998, 175). This insight represents a direct challenge to the mainstream monotype approach to state. "States act differently toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not. Anarchy and the distribution of power are insufficient to tell us which is which" (A. Wendt 1992, 397).

Although the processes of production and reproduction of self and others are always in progress and subject to change, they might get reified and regarded as given and natural as they remain stable long enough (A. Wendt 1999, 37).

Elsewhere, Wendt (1992, 405) recognizes this in greater detail by associating it with the mechanism of reinforcement; that is, through interaction; actors tend to hold specific ideas about self and other in the form of 'reciprocal typifications' through which stable social structures define identities and interests. Wendt (1992, 420) takes it further and deems it as the duty of the social theory to denaturalize this reification;

In periods of relatively stable role identities, ideas and structures may become reified and thus treated as things that exist independently of social action. If so, the second stage is one of denaturalization, of identifying the practices that reproduce seemingly inevitable ideas about self and other[...]

The issue of reification is more of a problem when the nature of mutual interaction is affiliated with the images of enmity and harmony between states. In the detailed analysis of the relations between the US and Cuba, Weldes&Saco (1996, 363) asserts that ideas, particularly with the nature of enmity, persists, albeit systemic change. A more general promotion to the argument is pursued by Wendt (1999, 261), arguing that, even today, some states might position themselves in accordance with the enemy images established through historical narratives, some spanning for centuries. In a socially structured world, established images might serve the purpose of reducing uncertainties among actors by creating a capacity for predictability that a certain action one takes might follow certain consequences (Hopf 1998, 178).

2.2. Theoretical 'Middle Ground'

Although a detailed inquiry of the ontological and epistemological debate in an extensive manner is beyond the scope of the research, the middle ground position and associated debates derived from this position might be illuminating for justification of the critical and analytical framework the research is founded upon. In this regard, the ontological and epistemological debate presented here intends rather to touch upon the debate with an instrumental motive for the ongoing analysis than delineate the constructivist ontological and epistemological deliberation.

2.2.1. Ontological Position

Starting with its ontological position, the constructivist debate is pursued with critical reference to materialists that attain a deterministic role to the physical world on political behavior and individualist theories that underrate the collective understanding ontologically or by treating them as contingent upon the individual action. In this regard, constructivism is founded upon two interrelated positions; ideational ontology and holism. Whereas the ideational ontology highlights the role of ideational factors in shaping human interaction, holism attains 'collectively shared, intersubjective beliefs' primacy over individual action (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 393).

Interpreting Wendt's approach, Palan (2000, 576) asserts that along with different strands of social theory, Wendt's constructivism is specifically analogous to 'idealism' which meant;

(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces; and (2) identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.

Guzzini stresses the 'sociological turn' in International Relations through constructivism, referring to the premise that meaningful action and knowledge, along with the identities and interests, are constructed within a social context. In this regard, constructivist ontology is about the social construction of the meaning/knowledge as well as reality. However, this emphasis on ideas and social construction of reality differs from the idealism and post-structuralism it is broadly associated with. Whereas constructivism differed from pure idealism as it regards the construction of ideas within a historical context and institutional structure rather than assuming a form of emergence in a vacuum, the difference with post-structuralism stemmed from the acceptance of the materialist forces along with ideational ones (2000, 148&149). Wendt clearly states the division with the post-structuralism;

Idealist social theory is not about denying the existence of real world. The point is that the real world consists of a lot more than material forces as such. Unlike a more radical constructivist position, I do not deny the existence and independent casual powers of those forces, but I do think they are less important and interesting than the contexts of meaning that human beings construct around them

Wendt's acknowledgment of material forces is most evident with his structuralism and state-centered ontology. However, for instance, structure for constructivism is only granted casual powers derived from social interaction and actor's practices, unlike Waltz's structural theory that is based on the anarchic structure, which is independent of interaction. In this regard, it is not the anarchic structure of international politics that Wendt disputes but the explanations that neorealists provide (Zehfuss 2015, 55). In that sense, it is not the anarchy itself but the pre-supposed nature attributed to it that dictates self-help and conflict.

If states behave conflictually toward one another, then it appears that the 'nature' of international anarchy is conflictual. If states behave cooperatively toward one another, then it *appears* [emphasis in original] that the 'nature' of international anarchy is cooperative (Weber 2010, 62).

Zehfuss perceives this ontological approach of constructivism within the framework of limited construction, which underlines the importance of meaning, yet concedes to a priori reality out there. Having admitted that it is problematic, Zehfuss stresses the central position the limited construction and the ontological middle ground have for constructivism (2002, 10).

These philosophical roots of the limited construction are identified with the 'linguistic turn' of Wittgenstein, which places language a constitutive role rather than just as a mirror of reality out there. However, the constructive role is not independent of a pre-given system of linguistic meaning, acknowledgment of which sever them from more radical constructivist approaches and poststructuralists (K.M. Fierke and Jørgensen 2015, 4&5). However, the recognition of a priori reality, as well as material forces, shall not underrate the profound ontological distinction with the mainstream materialist approaches. Although it does not defer to the poststructuralist

reflexivity or relativity, the notoriety of the constructivism is built upon the critical position towards mainstream materialist theories.

Another point of ontological divergence is about the individualist ontology expressed mostly through the assumption of rational choice on the part of the actors.

The individualistic answer to the ontological question reduces the epistemological issue to a choice between either treating actors wholly as objective maximizers of utility, most successfully formalized in rational choice theory, or viewing them as subjective, interpretative agents pursuing individual goals, an approach deeply rooted in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and Wittgenstein's later philosophy, as well as contemporary analytical and psychological theories of action (Carlsnaes 1992, 249)

Rationalism, as an individualist theory of action, considers humans (actors) as self-interested utility-maximizers who take part in consistent preference ranking among the choices available. Hence, as long as the preferences (desires) and the prospect of success on the part of actors are established, it is possible to make inferences about the behavior (Guzzini 2000, 163). Besides, when combined with the materialist ontology, as usually happened, it is not an arduous feat for rationalists to imbue the content of these preferences. Following a similar definition of the rational choice approach, Checkel (1998, 327) maintains that the content of the interests is typically assumed to be brimming with material goods like power or wealth, setting aside the norms and social structures by assigning them, at most, a constraining role within the means-ends calculations.

Rationalism limits the prospect of change in agents and structure for the reason that the identities and interests of states, as well as the nature of international anarchy that defines the interests and identities of states, are considered given. It only recognizes changes in the behavior of the states within the framework of pre-given and constant interest and identity (Weber 2010, 65). In other words, within the rationalist framework, the content or meaning of the state interest rarely changes through time and space; it is the

behavioral response or strategic decisions in order to achieve the already established interests may vary.

Constructivists, on the other hand, similar to their attitude with materialist ontology, integrate identities, ideas and norms to the explanatory framework of actors' decision-making processes.

Rationalists assume a static world of asocial egoists who are primarily concerned with interests. While constructivists would not deny the importance of interest, they would tie them more directly to the identity of the subject (K.M. Fierke 2013, 191).

Through the integration of identity and norms, self-interest attains a protean, intersubjective meaning. In this regard, the positivist practice of empirical verifications of the explanations of independent mechanisms is replaced with meaning interpretation and grasping the influence of changing practice (Zehfuss 2002, 4). Wendt (1999, 232) deliberately chooses 'subjective interest' instead of 'interest' or 'objective interest' that is utilized by rational choice referring to the preferences, tastes, or desires and use it as the imminent motivation for behavior through their judgment about the ways to meet their identity needs.

However, considering the recognition of differences in the tastes, preferences and desires in rational choice on the individual level, such an approach and manipulation of the terms does not pose the claimed ontological challenge. That is mainly because, the main criticism under inquiry no longer lingers on individualist ontology but instead is displaced to the epistemological investigation about the inception of these identities and interests. This positional problem is most detectable when he reduces the debate on rational choice to a methodological one;

Rationalists are interested in how incentives in the environment affect the price of behavior. To answer this question they treat identities and interests as if they were given, but this is perfectly consistent with the constructivist question of where those identities and interests come from - and vice-versa. If the issue is no more than methodological, in other words, identities and interests can be seen as endogenous or exogenous to structure *with respect to theory only*[emphasis in original], not reality (A. Wendt 1999, 34)

Although the challenge presented by the Wendtian alternative still remains relevant for the controversy addressed to the Waltzian structuralism in which actors' objective and interests are well-established, the argument is less assertive ontologically in its direct opposition to rational choice.

Concerning the paramount debate with rationalists, Zehfuss points out that constructivists -excluding more 'reflectivist' positions- are more sympathetic to the rationalist arguments contrary to the broadly assumed posture of contention. The position is ostensibly one of synthesis, and "the so-called middle ground is much closer to rationalism than to the other side" (2002, 5). Perplexion could be revealed through the use of the Weberian concept of 'verstehen'. Adler emphasizes the ontological importance of the term as opposed to the assumed epistemological function for interpretivists in seeking for 'what is in people's head?'. Within this framework, 'verstehen' refers to the social reality in the form of knowledge structures that are continuously (re)produced by actors through their behavior within the structure (1997, 326). Nevertheless, admitting the emphasis in the social in 'verstehen' as opposed to rationalism, credit accorded to individual cognition in constructivism blurs the distinction between rational choice and constructivism (K.M. Fierke 2013, 193). In a similar line of criticism to the alleged alternative to rational choice, Laffey&Weldes points out that the only feat pursued through these studies is to integrate ideas to the materialist framework of the rational choice approach, thus at best transforming it to the substantive rationality. Moreover, the alternative still leaves the core actors' mode of reasoning 'black-boxed' and focuses on individuals as the primary units of analysis. Hence, it can only propose a substantive yet still individualistic rationality (1997, 196).

This inability to create an ontological challenge to the individualistic framework, based upon the rational choice decision-making, partly resulted from the commitment on the part of constructivists to state. Regardless of the nature of the debates constructivism seeks to have on ontological grounds, as a systemic theory, state is mostly regarded as a separate existence. This

is mostly due to the epistemological need to create a less complicated agent-structure relation by reducing the entity of agency to state stripped from its parts. This tendency is nowhere more evident than in Wendt's analysis, who attributes states a real body not reducible to its parts as well as anthropomorphic qualities like desires, beliefs, and intentionality (A. Wendt 1999, 197). While the 'real body' granted to the state fulfills the above-mentioned function to have a less-complex agent-structure debate, the human-like properties of state arise out of the necessity of positing organic elements to that body in order to be able to challenge materialism in rational choice. However, the attempt to conceptualize an anthropomorphic state drew criticism from either end of the theoretical spectrum; nominalists criticized the very idea of the separate existence of states while realists, reifying with Wendt's terminology, raise the importance of state without explaining its internal structure. The common ground of criticism is that state is not a moral agent; hence cannot be ascribed human characteristics, and it is, at best, a useful fiction or metaphor (Burchill 2005, 190).

Although this approach is quite successful in creating less materialistic rationality, it enhances the problem of individualistic ontology embedded in the mainstream theory. Moreover, regarding state as the sole agent in the agent-structure problem limits the constructive dynamics of the ideational framework to inter-state/intra-structure relations;

Constructivism is a structural theory of international system that makes the following core claims; (1) states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory; (2) the key structures in the states system are intersubjective, rather than material; and (3) state identities and interests are in *important part constructed by these social structures* [emphasis added], rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics (A. Wendt 1994, 385)

Hence, the conception of 'verstehen' remains limited to "what is in *states*' head?" that is mainly established through social relations. Wendt can simply evade the problem by keeping the theory within the confines of systemic theory and remain structuralist;

Theories of international politics are distinguished from those that have as their object explaining the behavior of individual states, of theories of foreign policy. It is important that IR do both kinds of theorizing, but their dependent variables, aggregate behavior versus unit behavior, are on different levels of analysis, and so their explanations are not comparable. Their relationship is complementary rather than competitive. Like Waltz, I am interested in international politics, not foreign policy (A. Wendt 1999, 11)

Naturally, the analytical focus of the structural theory and foreign policy is different. While Waltz's structuralism might have this claim of complementary relationship as it reduces interest and rationality to particular given material dynamics similar for all actors, such a reduction and a similar line of proposition seem paradoxical for Wendt's structuralism. However, the source of the paradox lies not in Wendt's structuralism but in his attempt to maintain the agency of state by attributing it human-like properties. The anthropomorphic features of state both denudes human agency and elides the causal power of state as structure (Wight 2004, 280). While it might be consistent with the Waltzian structuralism to have a monotype conception of state, it seems like an impossible feat to emphasize normative features and their constructed nature and still keep the international structure as the sole level of analysis. Such an attempt inevitably ends up limiting the process of construction of the norms to the international interaction and restricting the frame of reference to some international cultural practices.

Burchill realizes a similar line of problem in Finnemore's approach to state as unified actors limiting the framework of socialization to inter-state relations within international society, akin to the socialization of individuals socialized within domestic society. The analysis remains in agreement with the neorealist systemic analysis with an emphasis on the impact of social norms, cultural practices, and social values in structuring the ways in which the actors understand what kind of actions are valuable (2005, 198–201). In that sense, the line of analysis is a perfect example of the reinstatement of the rationality in a different, more substantive form. As long as states are regarded as identical individuals, the role of the social norms in inter-state socialization is limited to the question of perception, crippling the emphasis on the process of construction. Fierke establishes a line of difference between neoliberal and

constructivist adoption of ideas with the emphasis on the individual/social dichotomy. The line of difference is established through neoliberal² engagement with fully-formed individuals exchanging ideas within a problem-solving mindset, while the identities of individuals(states) are formed through their interaction within the social context (2013, 190). Although the constructivist frame established here emphasizes the social ontology through the interaction of states, the identity, thus the decisions of the actors, are based primarily on how they *perceive* the nature of this interaction.

In this regard, this social ontology fails equally in the sense that intra-state socialization is disregarded in perception and identity construction. In short, any analysis that regards the state as a unified actor falls back to Wendt's analogy of individuals within the state to neurons within the human brain (1999, 221) and disregards the role of domestic socialization in the construction of the identity of state. Within this framework, in order to be able to maintain a structural analysis with a critical attitude towards individualistic ontology of the rational choice approach, it is necessary to regard state not as an ontological reality with human-like properties but as a structure in itself with diverging domestic dynamics. The most coherent criticism to the constructivist commitment to state-centric approach and framework of construction limited to the inter-state relations is pursued by Weldes (1996, 280) through her arguments about national interest;

States are only analytically, but not in fact, unitary actors. The meanings which objects, events and actions have for 'states' are necessarily the meanings they have for those individuals who act in the name of the state. And these state officials do not approach international politics with a blank slate on to which meanings are written only as a result of interactions among states. Instead, they approach international politics with an already quite comprehensive elaborate appreciation of the world, of the international system and of the place of their state within it.

Although a more detailed argument would be presented concerning the methodology of the research, it is necessary to make it clear that, in order to avoid a similar ontological fallacy of the individualist approach to state, the

² Argued with reference to the work of Goldstein and Keohane

analysis shall forsake the level of analysis problem to a certain extent and emphasize the domestic as well as international dynamics in its examination of the construction of identities and its effect on the definition of specific policies.

2.2.2. Epistemological Position

Checkel (1998, 327) stresses that the main criticism constructivist perspective directed towards mainstream theories is not epistemological, but an ontological one; as causal explanations and science are not renounced by constructivists. Zehfuss recognizes this middle ground as a bridge between mainstream IR theories and post-modernists and locates it adjacent to post-positivists in terms of ontology with its emphasis on 'substantive concerns'; whereas, epistemologically, it is perceived to be more closely associated with the mainstream theories (Zehfuss 2002, 2). Constructivism is distinguished from poststructuralists with its objective of explanation rather than emancipation and with its interest in the examination of case studies (K.M. Fierke 2013, 93). However, that position raises the question of consistency, arising from combining a social ontology and positivist epistemology or utilizing positivist expression of causality and hypothesis testing that fundamentally instituted upon the separation of the external world and internal thought processes of individuals for inquiries of social context (K.M. Fierke 2013, 192&193).

The issue of inconsistency drew criticism on the part of constructivist arguments being limited to the meta-theoretical level, yet constructivism resolved the methodological problem with the integration of the Durkheimian approach akin to 'revealed preferences' in economics that helped it remain attached to positivist practices (Ruggie 2003, 28). Nevertheless, such an approach to constructivist epistemology inevitably falls short of demonstrating the innate complexity that stemmed from the ontological position. Through the juxtaposition of ontological position, Fierke (2013, 197) underlines the role

of the language as the expression of generations of meaning, norms, and rules signified within a social context, aside from the more conventional approach with the emphasis on intentions of individuals. In this regard, the constructivist emphasis on 'linguistic turn' that is fundamentally linked to its ontological position could also be utilized to form an epistemological position consistent with the ontology.

Kratochwil (2015, 20), having admitted the ontological constructive function, extends the 'linguistic turn' of Wittengstein to the pragmatic and conventional character of language in establishing "harmony between the *res cogitans*³ and the *res extensa*⁴." In addition to the previously disclosed ontological constructive function, 'linguistic turn' serves for the epistemological objective of establishing a bridge between the subject and object, an immediate necessity for the justification of constructivist perspective on epistemological grounds. In other words, 'linguistic turn' not only establishes the ontological framework for the construction of 'meaning', but it also constitutes the epistemological ground through which the examination of the relationship between the actors and the subjective interpretation of the previously constructed meaning is possible. Guzzini (2000, 159) also underlines the importance of 'discursive practices' for constructivist epistemology by arguing that whereas constructivism consents to the existence of a phenomenal world, of brute facts-independent of discursive practices; "it challenges their language-independent observation".

Nevertheless, it is not raw empiricism based on the existence of observable raw data out there that constructivist epistemology could be established. The ontological and epistemological position of constructivism requires, above all else, the acknowledgment of the process of 'interpretation'; both of the actors

³a thinking thing (as the mind or soul) <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/res%20cogitan>

⁴an extended thing or substance : material substance <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/res%20extensa>

under inquiry and of the researcher itself. This point is discernibly asserted by Price&Reus-Smit (1998);

Constructivism's core assumptions have also shaped the methods by which constructivists go about answering their questions. Constructivists need methods that can capture the intersubjective meanings at the core of their approach. Constructivists recognize that all research involves interpretation, and thus there is no neutral stance from which they can gather objective knowledge about the world (as cited in; Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 394)

Interpretation, however, shall not be understood as an intentional or conscious activity of actors but rather should be linked to shared meanings within a society that articulates the meaning attached to any particular events by the actors. The course of interpretation inherently prevents analysis from remaining on the level of pure observation as in naturalist approaches to social sciences. The recognition of the possibility of divergence in meaning of the equal actions naturally raises the constructivist focus to the level of meaning from observation (Guzzini 2000, 161&162). Nevertheless, constructivists also differ in the ways the interpretation shall be conducted and the nature of the knowledge it yields. While postmodern variants question the analytical effort and knowledge claims and focus instead on deconstruction and of the analytical claims of others, modern variants grant credence, though with a different degree as some are considered more persuasive than others, to evidence and derived interpretations and explanations (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 394).

The division among the constructivists, however, is far from being limited to the question of the validity and application of interpretation as a research method. As discussed beforehand regarding the issue of definition, any emphasis on the nature of constructivism either tries to ascertain the mostly shared assumptions among constructivists, an attempt followed throughout this chapter, or succumb to the assumptions of a certain variant. In fact, any attempt to follow through some shared assumptions on the nature of constructivism inevitably endorses one variant and overlooks others.

Although the epistemological ground and the analytical roadmap of the research would be justified throughout the following sections of the chapter, beforehand, it is necessary to provide an introduction to some of the variants that emerged under the banner of constructivism. The necessity, above all else, emanates from the need to feature the diversity and abstain from overlooking variance and flexibility inherent in constructivism rather than positing the framework of the research within one of the variants. Nevertheless, along with the examination of the epistemological background and analytical framework of the research, the introduction of the variants aims to reveal the possibility of an eclectic approach without condescending to theoretical inconsistency.

2.3. Variants of Constructivism

Whereas the controversy about who is regarded under the banner of constructivism has frequently resolved to a certain extent through the shared ontological and epistemological assumptions, extensive focus on the shared assumptions inevitably leads to apathy on the part of diversities within the perspective. Furthermore, it is possible to come across different ways and labels employed to categorize the variances. Although most categorizations refer to the different representations of analogous ontological and epistemological differences, the research intends to respect the divergences in the labels of categorizations and avoid collapsing them into a select version as different representations for the choices in labeling could be perceived as a form of construction on the part of the perspective as well as selective intellectual emphasis.

If the intention is to collapse all the variations into one generally accepted categorization, it would be the critical/conventional dichotomy.

The distinction between conventional and critical constructivists often rests on the assumption that the former accepts the existence of an objective world, while the latter emphasizes 'merely' language (K.M. Fierke 2013, 194).

In a more detailed examination, Hopf identifies shared ontological interest in denaturalization of the world; the social construction of institutions, practices, and identities that are generally considered natural or given, is in fact, intersubjective reality/meaning, and mutual constitution of actor and structure. However, the main difference lies in the grounds of methodology and epistemology. While conventional constructivism is akin to 'normal science' even abstaining from interpretivist methodology, critical theory is found upon the opposition to this very stance owing to its constitutive (post-positivist) epistemology (1998, 182).

Borrowing from the categorization of Lynch&Klotz(1996), Adler introduces four different groups separated with methodological differences. While the modernists are distinguished with their acceptance of standard methodology alongside interpretive methods, the other three categories are posited along the spectrum of post-positivist methodology with shifting emphasis (as cited in; Adler 1997, 335). Palan`s (2000, 576) taxonomy of hard and soft constructivism consists relatively more ontological emphasis;

Hard constructivists [...] believe that social institutions and structures are nothing but 'artifice of man-made institutions, and maintain 'both international system and the state in terms of normatively constituted practices. Soft constructivists are an eclectic lot consisting of practically anyone who shows interest in culture, identity, norms and accept the notion that 'actors' interests are not fixed but change and arise out of social context

A categorization corresponding with conventional/critical taxonomy in terms of epistemological distinction is presented by Checkel (2008, 72), though under the labels North American/European, respectively, echoing the dominant intellectual tradition. Lastly, Ruggie underlines the epistemological distinction among constructivists and generates three variants yet with a slightly different foundation than conventional/critical taxonomy. Neo-classical constructivism, the first among three, focuses on the analytical tools utilized for the examination of intersubjective meanings hence akin to epistemological pragmatism and accommodate a certain level of commitment to social science with a more pluralistic emphasis. The second variant, the

post-modernist, stresses the linguistic construction of subjects, hence contains little claim for an orthodox scientific objective. While these two variants are quite similar to the conventional/critical taxonomy mentioned beforehand, Ruggie integrates a third variant, naturalistic constructivism, that is grounded in the philosophical doctrine of scientific realism and epistemologically posited between the other two variants (2003, 35&36).

Regardless of the crucial differences between variants and numerous strategies in labeling, all the taxonomies refer to a similar focus on social facts and the shared interest in the processes through which the social facts are constructed and the ways they affect the global politics (Pouliot 2004, 320). This emphasis on the common framework pursued by Pouliot compiles the structure and objective of many research, including this one, and debates guided by the constructivist perspective. Nevertheless, an inquiry of the constructivist theory, which is solely based on the shared and controversial points on ontology and epistemology within the perspective, does not suffice to disclose the exclusive position of constructivism in relation to mainstream theories in a concrete fashion. Moreover, as the utilization of constructivism by way of analogy between other theories, particularly realism, is the chief objective of this research, it is compelling to hold a comparative analysis of constructivism vis a vis mainstream theories. In this regard, the next section will hold such an inquiry by mainly way of conveying fundamental criticism of mainstream theories presented by constructivism as well as some shared positions.

2.4. In Relation to Mainstream Theories;

Conceding the above-mentioned problem of a coherent definition of constructivism, it is relatively an easier feat to posit constructivism side by side with the main strands of International Relations. Having reshaped the *theoretical imageries* presented in 'Culture of National Security', such a feat is accomplished by Dessler when he argued, "[c]onstructivism is the approach

that results when both materialism and rationalism is rejected”(1999, 125). In a similar vein, Checkel proclaims that the challenge to materialism and methodological individualism, as the central tenets of contemporary IR scholarship, is to generate the main framework of constructivist scholarship (1998, 326). In fact, this imagery does not stand as an oversimplification of the distinctive status of constructivism, specifically in relation to the mainstream theories of International Relations. In this regard, despite augmented analysis that would be provided here, the main framework of the analysis would immerse and support the contention to materialism and rationalism.

The ontological and epistemological introduction of constructivism provided in the previous section of the chapter provides the central tenets of the criticism constructivism puts forward specifically concerning structuralism and rational choice through their association with materialist and individualist ontologies of the mainstream theories. Although the central aspect of constructivist content seems to be ontological, it is necessary to transfer the debate to its reflections on international politics. The objective is to reveal constructivist debates not only on contemporary and more concrete issues of international politics but also to the field of discussion mainstream theories are concerned with. That is because issues like the role of structure in world politics, anarchy, state interest, the nature of power, and the prospect of change are also issues of interest for constructivism though they disagree on the nature of these issues (Hopf 1998, 181). Moreover, having vested with the positivist and exclusively materialist philosophies of science, realists and neorealists delimit International Relations to “behavioral responses to the forces of physics that act on material objects from the outside” rather than exerting themselves by facing challenges presented by the idealist ontology (Adler 1997, 321).

Having admitted the casual powers of brute material forces like biological needs, the physical environment, and technological artifacts, Wendt (1999,

41) questions the explanatory power of material forces once separated from ideas. Concerning neorealism and neoliberalism, he criticizes them as being 'under-socialized' "in the sense that they pay insufficient attention to the ways in which the actors in world politics are socially constructed" (A. Wendt 1999, 4).

2.4.1. Structure & Change

The problem of undersocialization reveals itself best in the discussions regarding structuralism. Although structuralism has been discussed regarding the ontological position of constructivism with reference to state, rational choice, and individualistic ontology, an analysis, still relevant but more pertinent to neorealism, is also imminent. Despite their acknowledgment of the role played by material factors, constructivists emphasize norms and shared understanding of legitimate behavior along with material factors, yet structure not only constrains the behavioral choice of actors, but it also has a constitutive role (K.M. Fierke 2013, 190).

[N]eorealism, like microeconomics, is characterized by 'situational determinism', by a model of action in which rational behavior is conditioned or even determined by the structure of choice situations[...] This definition leads to an understanding of system structures as only constraining the agency of preexisting states (A. E. Wendt 1987, 342).

Through unit-level/structural distinction, neorealist formulation separates the structure from the agents and practices by which it is produced and reproduced, leading to a *reified* view of the structure (A. Wendt 1999, 146). The reification contributes to the image of a structure as an entity independent of agency and social action. However, for constructivists, even the issue of reification is not independent of agents' perception.

The problem with such reification is not that agents do not in fact reify social structures. They do, and it is precisely for this reason that social structures act as social facts; that is, as external constraints upon agents (Friedman and Starr 1997, 34).

The neorealist approach to structure is the best indication of positivist epistemology even among the realist stream. The positivist practice works through testing fixed definitions and variables against the world from the position of a neutral observer; a stance denounced for enhancing the status quo by critics (K.M. Fierke 2015, 116).

For constructivists, the practice or epistemological necessity of fixation is the central issue to be disputed. The objective of the constructivist research is to explain or understand change at the international level as the idea of social construction contradicts with the assumption of a single objective reality and instead commends difference across context (K.M. Fierke 2013, 189). The prospect of change constitutes an essential pillar of difference between constructivist and neorealist understanding of structure. “Neorealism acknowledges the possibility of structural change in one sense – namely transitions from one distribution of power to another” (A. Wendt 1999, 17).

Although the constructivist criticism for the issue of change is generally misperceived as focused on realists` inability to predict a particular change; namely, the end of the Cold War, the real focus has been on the fact that prevailing theories did not presume any prospect of change in the first place (Guzzini 2000, 155). As the system is considered to be of human invention or creation that consists of set of ideas, a body of thought, and a system of norms rather than pure material kind; the prospect of change is dependent upon the transformation of thought and ideas existent in the system (Burchill 2005, 186). However, constructivists do not have a concept of voluntary structural change; that is, structural change is not possible just by desiring it. As the rules and norms guide the behavior of actors, structural change implies a transformation on the normative level (Guzzini 2000, 155). Hence, the processes through which the intersubjective understanding of the norms of the international system is under inquiry. It is the processes that need to be examined, as the structure of international system is produced, reproduced,

and sometimes transformed through the interaction of states (A. Wendt 1999, 366).

2.4.2. Power & National Interest

The constructivist approach to the concept of power is also associated with the definition and transformation of the norms. Even though constructivists do not deny the materialist conceptualization of power in international politics, they also emphasize the discursive power, which lies at the center of the definition and transformation of the norms and ideas for the system; regardless, it is defined at international structure or unit behavior.

It is the power defined through the capacity to reproduce the intersubjective meanings through which social structures, as well as actors, are constructed (Hopf 1998, 178). In this regard, for constructivists, the discursive power is the central pillar through which the configuration of the structure is defined, established, and transformed by way of social practices. Hence it is indispensable to the question of continuity and change of the systemic parameters. "One aspect of constructivist power is the power to reproduce, discipline, and police. When such power is realized, change in world politics is very hard indeed" (Hopf 1998, 180). Within this framework, the constructivist conceptualization of power could be the basis of any explanation of structural change as well as continuity in the form of reification.

Moreover, this conceptualization of discursive power with the emphasis of social practices reconstructs the contextualization of the concept from an end-in-itself in the delineation of national interest and guiding post for the behavior of states to a strategic tool and a mean utilized domestically and internationally for contextually shaped objectives. Hence it not only creates an analytical space for any approach to define objectives on the part of actors instead of limiting the research to an already established framework of power maximization but also enables the utilization of a framework of agency that

includes non-state and domestic actors, while state remains almost the sole shareholder, thus black-box agent to analyze, of the realist power conceptualization. It is through the utilization of an analogous conceptualization of power that enables Checkel (1997, 476) to pursue the 'empowerment process' referring to the ways norms reach to the domestic arena and become a focus of domestic political attention even prior to any effect they may have on actors' identities and behavior. With a similar focus on the process of domestic adoption of the norms, Jung (2019, 4) highlights 'the role of strategic agency' as purposive activist individuals in altering existing norms and generating and promoting new norms with the purpose of achieving states' recognition. In that sense, what need to be the subject of constructivist inquiry are the processes through which norms find their way to domestic politics and affect national-level policy-making and reconstitute national interest.

Hence the concept of power is also an integral part of the constructivist understanding of national interest. The issue of national interest no longer remains within the structurally imposed objective of power maximization and behavioral options that states faced. As the social interaction becomes an independent variable shaping the states' identity as well as the nature of the international structure, the issue of power shall be perceived within a contextual framework in which the nature of social interaction is shaped. However, as the nature of international structure is generally stable and reified, revealing the long-term diffusion and effect of discursive power, the association between discursive power and national interest is difficult to find at the international level with the immediate effects.

Having admitted the materialist power conceptualization along with the discursive practices, constructivist analysis of national interest inevitably falls back to the mainstream line of work in analyzing the reified structure out there, that is, if it can provide any coherent content for the national interest. However, the real explanatory merits of the constructivist framework

regarding national interest reveal itself when it can overlook the level of analysis problem and anthropomorphized approach to the state and utilize the discursive power conceptualization within the domestic framework. Such an analytical framework to the issue of national interest is provided by Weldes who associates the content of national interest with the domestically 'shared language' antecedent to the process of interpretation.

The content of 'national interest', I then argue, is produced in, or emerges out of, a process representation through which state officials (among others) make sense of their international context. The 'national interest', that is, is constructed, is created as a meaningful object, out of shared meanings through which the world, particularly the international system and the place of state in it, is understood (Weldes 1996, 277).

In other words, while the impact of discursive power could be explored with the realization of the construction of a *reified* system of international structure that reveals itself best in mainstream theories which, by nature, take the reified as natural, a more imminent analytical inquiry could be conducted through a perspective that enables consideration of state as a structure in itself in which the construction of ideas, identities, and norms are pursued through social interaction. In this regard, it also enables emphasis on the domestic agency that pursues the construction of national interest. Hence, the definition of national interest should be emphasized as a domestic objective for different agencies of policy-making within a process through which discursive power practices are exerted rather than just a mean for an end, pre-defined in terms of material power.

[P]olicymaking is already imbued with power relations long before agendas are set or overt conflicts of interest erupt because all representational practices already entail—that is, enact and reify—power relations. Discourses bring with them the power to constitute worlds (Weldes 1998, 221).

Within the theoretical framework examined above, the objective of the research is to alter the theoretical emphasis of constructivism from the international political theory with a due inquiry of processes of inter-state socialization on the structural level to the construction of state identity and its impact on the particular policy decisions. With this objective in mind, the research will focus on the historical narrative of inter-state and state-structure relations and their impact on the construction of identities and ideas.

However, the research also aims to make amends for the lack of domestic emphasis and domestic socialization of different agents from which the constructivist framework suffers as much as mainstream theories. Last but not least, the examination intends to utilize the insights of foreign policy analysis within a constructivist framework to be able to develop a behavioral decision-making analysis and apply it to a specific case.

The following section, 'methodology of the research, how to apply the constructivist framework on a case study', aims to justify internal coherence and the ontological and epistemological convenience of the research to the above-mentioned theoretical framework.

2.5.Methodology

The methodology of the research mainly engages in the question of how to apply the constructivist insights to the case study. Considering the main emphasis of constructivist literature is on the systemic dynamics of international relations rather than empirical analysis of particular events, the application of the insights employed through the constructivist approach needs justification on the grounds of inherent coherence as well as consistency with the central precepts of the theoretical framework. In this regard, not only will the section serve as an analytical guideline for the research question of the analysis relevant to the particular case at hand, but it will also serve as a framework for the prospect of change for the constructivist emphasis from a systemic theory with mostly meta-theoretical arguments to a guideline for empirical research.

The first step in creating such a shift in emphasis without deviating from the founding assumptions of the constructivist approach requires advancing an agent-structure debate within the constructivist framework. The debate would be conducted with the purpose of providing room for proper agency within the constructivist emphasis of mutual constitution.

Having laid the foundations in the ontological introduction through criticism towards state-led ontology found in constructivist literature, the section aims to justify a conceptualization of state as a structure in itself rather than the sole agent of international politics with abstract anthropomorphic qualities. In this regard, the section would, above anything else, aims to denaturalize the state and deconstruct it to its internal constituents with the objective of identifying the proper agency within state. By regarding the state as a structure in itself and emphasizing the domestic actors and processes, the section enables the examination of the domestic dynamics of state identity construction; a prospect greatly circumscribed within the framework that attains anthropomorphized qualities to state, thus limits the construction of identity to inter-state socialization in the global field. However, the constructivist emphasis on social ontology and the significance of socialization in the process of identity construction is retained lest with the alteration in the level of analysis. This empirical position would naturally call for a justification for the designed neglect on the part of a deterministic approach to the level of analysis problem.

Furthermore, the disregard on the level of analysis problem needs to be justified as the research does not intend to overlook the role of international socialization and mutual construction at the systemic level while the emphasis on the domestic actors and processes of socialization is integrated into the analytical framework. As the constructivist framework pursues the mutual construction of the international structure and agents as well as mutual perceptions of the actors through the social interaction of states, the research regards the historical narratives of the states as the narrative of their socialization from which the excavation of the evidence and manifestations of their identity construction is possible. Although the inquiry of the ways the international structure is constructed and reified is beyond the scope and the research focus of the research, the excavation mission might provide solid grounds for the ways the structure is perceived by the agents. Moreover, the

history of mutual relations provides us with the insights about the mutual perceptions of the actors, hence the identification of self *vis a vis* other. In this regard, the nature of the relationship; as of harmony, enmity, domination, as well as the impact of certain events and possible traumas, shall be the focus of analysis.

However, the analytical utilization of the historical narrative for an empirical inquiry on identities requires an epistemological justification of the method and query on the part of compatibility with the constructivist perspective. In other words, the section, above all else, will provide the epistemological debate in terms of the validity of epistemological grounds of the designed research.

Hence the main methodological framework of the research is based upon the analytical synthesis of domestic and international dynamics of the construction of the state identity. While the international dynamics works through an empirical apparatus of historical narrative in order to discover the dynamics of international social interaction, the analysis of the domestic processes emphasize the agents; their interaction with each other within the structural conditions and state, and their impact on interpreting the international norms and constructing state identity and behavior.

2.5.1. Agent-Structure Debate & Level of Analysis Problem

The proposed theoretical framework pursued broad criticism towards the anthropomorphized state approach stated in Wendt's analysis in that it prevents him from displaying a valid criticism towards the individualistic ontology of rational choice. Nevertheless, the criticism does not express a position of neglect on the part of agency. On the contrary, granting human-like qualities to state inevitably reduces their promise of variance to the difference in their interpretation of the structure and overlooks the ideational dynamics mostly created in the domestic field. Without an examination of the

domestic sources of ideational differences, the state agency remains a passive interpreter of the structural conditions and gives up most of its creative ability.

Wight, in his extensive review of the anthropomorphized state from the viewpoint of agent-structure debate, argues that the approach brings agency into the constructivist analysis, but it is one with no human activity. Treating state as a person results in an individualist comeback by denuding the social field of human agency. State is equipped with the properties people possess because agency is dependent upon those qualities. However, the methodological *as if* treatment does not change the fact that it is people who act, not the states (2004, 270–74). Likewise, Friedman&Starr criticizes Wendt's generative approach for stripping the agency of its conceptual autonomy by establishing its existence solely on social relations. Thus, the agency hovers as passive bearers of the structural conditions, which shatters the constructivist criticism towards mainstream structural theories (1997, 42–45). Shannon (2005, 582) even associates the conceptualization of agency with materialism along with structural determinism;

Though Wendt insists that 'human agency matters', he does not reconcile this conceptually. Wendt provides agency only with a 'reduced role' in the process of reaching the inevitable outcome — a World State via the 'multiple realizability' of agency. But if agency is granted a free hand in crafting the future, that future must be contingent and open-ended. Wendt's argument is ultimately structural determinism, premised on materialist forces.[...] Rather than grapple with the complex options the multitude of states can take (not to mention the actions historically, empirically taken at junctures of world history), he is forced into assuming that all actors would behave in a certain way.

A necessary distinction that should be followed is between the social ontology and methodological holism. Social ontology does not necessarily prevent analytical commitment on the part of individuals. Onuf makes the connection through rules(2015, 59);

Constructivism holds that people make society, and society makes people. This is a continuous, two-way process. In order to study it, we must start in the middle, so to speak, because people and society, always having made each other, are already there and just about to change. To make a virtue of necessity, we will start in the middle, between people and society, by introducing a third element, rules, that always links the other two elements together. Social rules (the term rules includes,

but is not restricted to, legal rules) make the process by which people and society constitute each other continuous and reciprocal.

However, the relationship between agent and structure is a source of ontological debate among the constructivists. Gould (2015, 83), having admitted that agents and structures constitute each other and it is the rules that make the connection, asserts that “structure is in the minds' eye, existing as agents see patterns to which they impute structure”. Onuf follows a similarly critical position and even suggests that constructivists should not use the word ‘structure’ but choose *social arrangements*(2015, 64). On the other hand, Wendt(1995, 75) does not question structure as an objective existence, yet treats them as “collective phenomena that confront individuals as externally existing social facts”.

The identity of individuals, along with their perceptions and interpretations of the nature of social relations, is part of the constructive dynamics of the structure. Carlnaes problematizes the assumption of antagonistic connotation between agents and social structures and pursues that it is not possible to have a full grasp of one without invoking the other. On the other hand, the collectivist approaches, through methodological holism, reduces the individual action to a certain function in the social order and treat action in terms of the objective pursuit of interest (1992, 246–48).

Despite their argument of mutually constituting agents and structures, constructivists have followed a structure-centered approach in their empirical work. The position mainly stemmed from their focus on the collectively held inter-subjective approach to norms. However, norms, particularly at their earlier stages of development, consist of little collective meaning and are, for the most part, promoted by certain individuals, i.e., norm entrepreneurs. In this regard, constructivists should also pay attention to the social construction at the level of agents in order to be able to develop a line of analysis connecting micro-foundations and outcomes (J. T. Checkel 1998, 341&342). Moreover, due to the intentional overlook of the domestic agency, the

constructivist analytical focus remains within the context of international normative influence, thus fails to explain cross-national variations. This outside-in structural emphasis mostly ignores the role of agency in adopter population and works through simplifying assumptions. On the other hand, domestic empowerment is a bottom-up process of societal pressure reflecting the intentional endeavor that counters the existing domestic norms (J. T. Checkel 1999, 85). The emphasis granted to the domestic agency does not necessarily neglect the importance of international structure. On the contrary, it is not possible to have a grasp on the political effects of the global structures without understanding the ways the domestic processes performed (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 397).

As illustrated through the norm diffusion process, the problem at hand is not only related to the structural determinism on the part of the agent-structure debate but the nature of the agent, which is mostly reduced to state.

By making the state the key decision-maker of the “nature” of international anarchy, constructivism contradicts its own argument that identities and interests are always in flux. It allows that the *interests* of states, conflictual or cooperative, change. But by making the character of international anarchy dependent upon what states decide to make it, constructivism produces the identity of the state as decision-maker, and *this identity cannot* be changed. If the identity of the state as decision-maker were questioned, the constructivist myth ‘anarchy is what states make of it’ would not function (Weber 2010, 62)

Friedman&Starr(1997, 17) suggests focusing on individual elites as units of analysis enables a conceptual space for recognizing that agents of international politics are situated within a concentrically arranged layer of structure through which incorporating variability into the agent-structure relationship as well as capturing the interpretive emphasis on the complex web of significance is possible.

In light of the arguments towards Wendt’s endeavor to create a less complicated agent-structure debate, it brings along the peril of structural determinism that shapes agents as passive bearers whose actions are limited to choice. Surmounting the problem requires integrating the active agency of

humanity, which could be found in the domestic realm. Moreover, the active agency with constructive prospect shall not mean a revival of individualistic ontology, which could be achieved through an analytical acknowledgment of social processes. An analytical examination within the critical constructivist framework was offered by Weldes, who underlines 'mode of reasoning' perspective in which individuals are regarded as depicitors who create representations of the world contrary to a form of agency reduced to a mere choice. The locus of the methodological mission is to excavate the representational practices through discourses (1998, 222&223).

To sum up, the main analytical issue under inquiry for the establishment of the analytical framework is the denaturalization of the level of analysis problem. In that sense, the research mainly intends to position itself against the argument;

Constructivist sensibilities encourage us to look at how actors are socially constructed, but they do not tell us which actors to study or where they are constructed. Before we can be a constructivist about anything we have to choose 'units' and 'levels' of analysis, or 'agents' and the 'structures' in which they are embedded (A. Wendt 1999, 7)

Following the intentional neglect of the level of analysis problem and integration of agency, the intended analysis becomes a lot more commensurable with FPA, giving more room for examinations of specific events and specific policy decisions. The integration of the insights of FPA into International Relations theorizing helps moving beyond natural law-like generalizations of state behavior and explaining the variability (Hudson 2005, 4).

Although the mainline of difference is the commitment to rational choice on the part of foreign policy analysis, the difference is less stark with the introduction of cognitive emphasis into foreign policy decision-making processes. Flanik (2011, 424) places both cognitive foreign policy analysis and constructivism on the same meta-theoretical position of 'subjective ontology', reducing their differences to the mere level of analysis problem.

Having already challenged the level of analysis problem makes it possible to argue that the research follows a framework of 'constructivist foreign policy analysis'.

2.5.2. Historical Narrative & Domestic Dynamics

The research would utilize historical narrative in examining the domestic and international dynamics of the reification of certain ideational factors. Dessler (1999, 129) introduces two distinct research strategies for the positivist explanations of events which could guide the employment of historiography;

The first is a *generalizing* strategy, according to which researchers treat the event to be explained as an instance of a certain *type* of event, which is then shown to accompany or follow regularly from conditions of specified kind.[...] The second strategy is a *particularizing* one, in which the researcher explains an event by detailing the sequence of happenings leading up to it.

'Notwithstanding any claim of positivism, the research is akin to *particularizing* strategy in its approach to events with an emphasis on the meanings they have for the actors. Kratochwil illustrates that the idea of employing appropriate historical examples as pragmatic lessons of the past with timeless validity for the future has been discredited by modern historiography. Instead, historical understanding can only be established when embedded and interpreted in a narrative indicating a vantage point of attempting to make sense of events. In that sense, the historical narrative as a biographical frame is associated with the construction and reconstruction of collective meanings (2015, 33). Ross offers the use of the study of trauma and memory in uncovering identity as well as the examination of the responses to the events, as long-term memories of historical events become folded into responses to more recent events (Ross 2006, 212–14). In this regard, the analytical objective is to capture the significant events and memories shaping the formation of the images of self and others.

Moreover, the analytical framework helps tackle the definitional problem regarding the concept of identity. Finnemore&Sikkink (2001, 399) underlines

the absence of an agreed-on definition for the identity-research and recognizes Wendt's approach utilizing actor's self-understanding with the provision of necessity on the part of recognition by other actors. The intersubjective quality of identity, based upon internal and external identification, overlaps with the analytical framework sensitive towards domestic and international settings.

While the nature of mutual relations between states, with the inevitable emphasis on Russia and Georgia, would be the primary inquiry of the excavation mission for international dynamics, the way states position themselves within the already established structural conditions are also regarded as indicators of self-identification. On the other hand, the meaning attributed to the historical narrative as well as to the rules and regulations of international structure is thought to be dependent upon the domestic ideational dynamics. The construction of the ideational dynamics is the subject of analytical inquiry through the examination of the role of national elites and national bureaucracy in shaping the interpretive processes. Moreover, the analytical focus on the domestic agents allows room for the explanations of the ideational bases of the momentary decisions along with the general positioning of themselves. Within the scope of the research, this prospect will be utilized in reviewing the decisions of actors leading to the war.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND DOMESTIC DYNAMICS IN UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY; CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN FOREIGN POLICY

On a daily basis, one encounters deeply ingrained beliefs, myths and behaviors that extend from the past into contemporary social and political life in the Caucasus. The past is not just a mobilizational tool for Caucasian elites, it is entangled in decision making at the highest level, whether it concerns policy toward national minorities, or relations with neighboring states (S. F. Jones 2014, 2)

Social interaction is the foundation upon which the research sets up its excavation quest in determining the ideational dynamics of the case at hand. The research utilizes the historical narrative within a malleable perspective on the level of analysis problem. Although there exists a natural peril of being too historically deterministic by applying direct links of causation, the research here is more interested in the formation of narratives as ideational signifiers and possible application of them as a governmental tool. The importance of the historical narrative for a better understanding of the conflict is underlined by Cornell&Starr (2009, 4);

Months after the events, analysts have focused more on the consequences of the war than on the war itself and its antecedent events. But any analysis of the August war's consequences is inevitably shaped by the narrative one accepts on the events themselves, and particularly on their deeper historical context. In order to understand the war, one must understand the evolution of Russian-Georgian relations, as well as Georgia's and Russia's respective relations with the West, over the past two decades.

The focus of the excavation mission is not limited to the international dimensions of the social interaction with the states acclaimed as the sole subjects. Having admitted the significance of international interaction, the research also recognizes the domestic dynamics of identity construction, thus

intends to examine domestic interaction and socialization in its quest for ideational dynamics.

In that sense, the historical narrative not only serves the purpose of illustrating the account of interactions, but it also aims to shed light on how the nature of these relations is perceived to be by the actors. The nature of bilateral relations in the form of long-standing enmities and harmony or relations of domination will be the focus of the research. Through the account of bilateral relations, the research intends to make it possible to explore the construction of the established images of self and other. Within this framework, the historical account shall be perceived as the direct projection of bilateral interaction. Nevertheless, the domestic dynamics, like structural conditions and perceptions, and interests of national elites, affect the ways these narratives are constructed through the historical account. Hence, the analysis shall continue with the inquiry of the ways these narratives were perceived, constructed, and utilized in the domestic realm.

Finally, as the question of westernization and the relations with the West is an integral part of the conflict, it is necessary to locate the relations with the West and the issue of westernization as an ideational variable for the conflict. Although the issue of westernization might have integrated into the historical narrative, the debate is conducted as a part of a more significant debate around the civilizational project rather than a straightforward extension of bilateral relations.

3.1. Historical Narrative

While the natural focus of the historical narrative is on the bilateral relations between Russia and Georgia, the narratives on the part of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are included in the study. That is mainly because the nature of their interaction with Georgia and Russia affected the developments leading to the

war, despite general disregard on the part of analyses that are based on great power politics.

The appropriate starting point for the examination of the historical narrative might be the founding of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (DRG), which could only survive from 1918 to 1921 until it was annexed by the Red Army. Although the relations between Russians and Georgians certainly predate the DRG and its annexation, the memory of the DRG is distinctive, especially for the Georgian national identity and pertinent narrative for the Georgian Russian relations.

3.1.1. Democratic Republic of Georgia(1918-1921)

Despite her short span of existence and evident relative negligence toward her in the scholarly literature, the DRG left a lasting legacy, which is vital for a better grasp of the Georgian narrative. The DRG sprouted from the 'Menshevik' intellectual cadres who were essentially pro-Western social democrats. Much as the Bolsheviks perceived it as an ideological anathema, the Menshevik government of Georgia, led by Neo Zhordania, spearheaded new ideas, like combining social democracy with nation-state (Goltz 2009, 11). Despite their prior moderate attitude towards independence, their socialism was national in form, and the appropriate intellectual environment and opportune international events enabled them to pursue independence (Gachechiladze 2014, 18–21).

Within the scope and focus of the research, the experience of the DRG is crucial for the establishment of two different narratives, i.e., devotion to westernization and emergence of Russia as the image of other in the Georgian nationalist narrative.

The devotion to European identity, emphasized in the DRG from the first day onwards, had been followed uninterruptedly by the successive governments

of Georgia after 1991, albeit passages of authoritarianism (S. F. Jones 2014, 4&5). Moreover, the rule of a social democratic government contributed to the European image of the DRG, and it was hailed to be the first successful case of a democratic socialist state (Tarkhan-Mouravi 2014, 50).

The historical narrative of Georgia had, for the most part, been filled with her conflicts with Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Mongols, Turks, and Persians. Among them, the struggles against the Ottoman and Persian empires underlined the Orthodox Christian identity and led to a quest for alliances with powerful Christian allies, hence generating an appreciation on the part of Russian existence in South Caucasus. However, the Red Army invasion in 1921 caused alienation from Russia, similar to the historical memory which had shaped Georgian attitudes to Muslim powers (Allison et al. 1996, 517&518). “The first republic, its illegal destruction, and the brutality of Sovietization in the 1920s became central to new themes of national resistance” (Torja 2014, 317). Even today, the impact of the DRG experience and Russian invasion on the Georgian narrative can be detected in the “National Security Concept of Georgia” that dedicates the initial phrases of the section “Threats, Risks, and Challenges to the National Security of Georgia” to Russia with reference to the Soviet occupation of the DRG (National Security Concept of Georgia 2011). Torja (2014, 330) discovers the propagation of the pro-Western and anti-Russian narrative in the education system through specialized textbooks on Russian occupation and the creation of young patriot`s camps.

The Georgian SSR had officially condemned the 1921 annexation in November 1989, and the declaration of sovereignty of the Georgian SSR in March 1990 came with a declaration of the 1922 pact, on the basis of which the USSR was formed, illegal (Wheatley 2005, Zuercher 2005, as cited in; Wheatley 2009, 122). Hence, it is possible to claim that the narrative of domination and imperialism has worked in the new Georgian state with reference to the DRG.

In terms of the transformation of the nationalist narrative in an antagonistic way towards Russia and the development of European identity with the prominence of democracy, the legacy of the DRG is far more effective than her short life span suggested. Although trying to establish a direct causal relationship between the DRG experience and August War would be a questionable feat, it is attainable to claim that modern Georgia inherited and utilized the narrative of the DRG.

3.1.2. Soviet Legacy

The objective of the section is to inquiry about the legacy of the Soviet Union within the framework of post-Soviet conflicts. For this purpose, the analysis focuses on the governance structure of the USSR, i.e., ethnofederalism, and its impact on the ideational dynamics. King (2008, 4) determines “the clashes over borders and identities inside newly created states” as a common denominator of almost all the conflicts that boiled over across the former Soviet Union in the 1990s. However, for the sake of the ideational focus of the research, it is, above all else, necessary to be able to associate the institutional legacy of the Soviet Union with the clashes of identities raged across the post-Soviet space.

Broers (2004, 14) classifies the literature on violent conflict in Georgia into three main streams; ethnic difference based on historical grievances and conflicting identity claims, institutional legacy of Soviet ethnofederalism, and weaknesses of Georgian statehood that had been analyzed through the low level of democratic culture, weak democratic institutions, and patronage networks. Although Broers does not in any way imply a necessity of selecting one version over another, the existence of such a classification requires justification for the application of the institutional legacy argument within the ideational framework underlined in the research. That is mainly because, unlike the examination of the DRG experience that has emphasized the

historical grievances resulting from the annexation of the Georgian state, the inquiry of the Soviet-era intends to accentuate the institutional and structural conditions. Although historical grievances and institutional legacy references essentially founded upon the diverging points of references, the inquiry of the institutional legacy, particularly of the Soviet Union, is not devoid of the ideational bases. On the contrary, the institutional legacy of the Soviet Union is imperative for the ideational inquiry of any conflict in the post-Soviet space. The Soviet period structured the nature of social relationships among communities by determining and arranging the very essence of ideational labeling.

Soviet state-building strategies reinforced this historical disjunction by articulating the institutional pathways of the state with ethnic affiliations, and over-laying ethnicity with a number of other social and economic cleavages. This made nationalism a viable and resonant ideology of resistance to Soviet rule in the late 1980s, in a context where numerous constraints to ethnic nationalism present in other post-Soviet republics were absent (Broers 2004, 16).

In simplest terms, the institutional legacy of the Soviet Union stems from the crystallization and institutionalization of ethnic identities through ethnofederalism. "Many post-Soviet national identities [...] scarcely existed in people's consciousness until Soviet policy arbitrarily made them titular nationalities of republics (J. Snyder 1993, 5&6). The Soviet state granted the major nationalities political status and ranked them within a hierarchical federal system in accordance with their population size, geographical location and political power with the Communist Party elite (Kirdar 2008, 55). The federal system consisted of fifteen union republics atop the hierarchical order. The union republics comprised autonomous republics and territorial administrative oblasts or krais. The autonomous republics were subordinate to the Union Republics and bestowed certain privileges concerning cultural autonomy and home rule. However, they were not granted the right to secede while the Union Republics had that right, at least on paper (Solnick 1998, 59).

Deibert, Rohozinski, and Crete-Nishihata (2012, 7) argue that the Soviet Union intentionally partitioned the constituent republics into smaller ethnic units in order to prevent ethnic unification within the borders of union

republics. In a similar line of argument, Sadri&Burns pursues that the encouragement of the political autonomy and nationalist identities enabled the Soviet Union to play divide-and-rule through fragmentation of the Caucasus and allowed her to assume the role of patron for the local people. Moreover, the policy hindered the prospect for Georgia to create a unified state (2010, 136).

Although it is hard to renounce the argument that the administrative structure of the USSR made it difficult for the successor republics to create ethnically unified nation-states, a rough review of the emergence and evolution of the Soviet nationality policy might dispute that the policy was deliberately adopted to cripple the prospect of the emergence of nation-states. The administrative system and the initial founding of the Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic or TcFSSR that included Armenia and Azerbaijan along with Georgia emanated from the earlier ideological debate and compromise between Lenin`s 'national self-determination' and the idea of *Homo Sovieticus*, i.e., the Soviet Man that resolved in favor of the former (Goltz 2009, 13). Slezkine (1994), in his more detailed analysis of the ethnic policy of the Soviet Union, associates the administrative structure of the Soviet Union with the grandeur debate of nationality question within the framework of socialism. The administrative structure was followed adamantly despite the difficulties in the implementation of the required policies. The question even paved the way for further intellectual and academic debate leading to the emergence of distinct Soviet theories and discussions of ethnicity (Bromley and Kozlov 1989; Shanin 1986; Tishkov 1997). Hence the ethnonational structure of the USSR stemmed from the founding ideological debate based on nationalism rather than pragmatic calculations regarding the prospect of the establishment of nation-states. However, it ostensibly generated the outcome for the former Soviet republics in the way of their attempt to create one, as Georgia standing one leading example.

Although Cheterian (2009, 166), in his analysis of the August conflict, questions the nationalist and ethnic nature of the conflict and argues that the conflict evolved around centralized state structures regarding borders and territorial control rather than popular mass mobilizations, the argument understates the impact of ethnofederalism in shaping the debates over the future borders. The collapse of the Soviet state followed the fault-line of the federal structure with the independence of the all 15 union republics that faced demands for greater autonomy coming from their former autonomous republics and oblasts. The borders of Georgian SSR constitute the sole reference -aside from the short-lived Democratic Republic of Georgia- for Georgian nation-builders in defining the borders of the state. Moreover, the dominance of ethnicity for the Soviet federalism in defining the nation made it difficult for Georgia, along with other newly independent states, to utilize civic (non-ethnic) conceptualization of nationality (Wheatley 2009, 120&121). Hence even though it is possible to argue that the August War might have changed the nature of the war in the Caucasus, it is problematic to strip the debate from ethnic references. Because ethnofederalism of the Soviet Union institutionalized the ethnic debate and made it an integral element of any debate for the nation and state-building of the future states, not excluding the controversies regarding the borders.

3.1.3. Post-Cold War

The collapse of the Soviet Union signified a period of transition that witnessed the transformations in the nature of relations, as well as in the construction and definition of the identities of self and other. The case of identity transformation was nowhere more evident than in Russia. Gorbachev altered Russia's self-image and the image of the West for Russia by carrying the logic of interaction from conflict to cooperation (da Silva Bezerra 2019, 21). However, this process of transformation and invention of the identity proved unsuccessful and Russia finally reverted to the idea of the restoration of the empire. On the other hand, along with other titular republics of the Soviet

Union, Georgia pursued independence and construction of the nation-state (Gordadze 2009, 28&29).

The processes of transformation for Georgia and Russia are mostly associated with domestic dynamics that will be discussed in the next section. Nevertheless, the period of transition is most crucial for the historical narrative of the conflict in terms of relations with the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. That is because the dissolution of the Soviet Union meant the loss of institutional guarantees concerning the rights of the autonomous regions or the minorities of the newly independent states (Kirdar 2008, 55). While Georgia identified her struggle for independence as disposing of the Russian imperial rule and a process of decolonization and expected the full support of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, these regions were more concerned with the loss of the cultural rights and autonomy they had had under the Soviet rule and took a conservative stand in favor of preserving the Soviet state (Cheterian 2009, 157). Moreover, Gamsakhurdia`s nationalist rallying cry, “Georgia for the Georgians”, intensified the concerns regarding the loss of rights and some Soviet-style affirmative action privileges enjoyed by populations of autonomous regions in the unitary Georgia Gamsakhurdia seem to have envisioned (Goltz 2009, 16&17).

Hence earlier years of independence witnessed two violent conflicts in the secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia between 1990-93 that caused around 17500 deaths and more than 200,000 internal refugees. Georgia practically lost control of the regions, the state institutions collapsed, and Gamsakhurdia was driven out of the office (Broers 2004, 8&9).

[B]oth provinces have remained functionally separate from Georgia for about the past 15 years, with their own parliaments, economies, educational systems, and armies – as well as a powerful narrative of valiant struggle against Georgian tyranny (King 2008, 4).

While Yeltsin took a neutral stance towards the conflict at earlier stages of the conflicts, Russia assumed a more active role in the conflict on the side of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a concession to the growing influence of the

military, nationalists, and conservative communists. Following the conflict, Russia maintained its existence and control in the region by assuming the peacekeeper role in the region (Gordadze 2009, 33&34). Under the terms of the ceasefire agreements, Russian troops remained as peacekeepers, and Russia solidified the *de facto* independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moreover, Russia handed out Russian citizenship to the inhabitants of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (King 2008, 5).

Bryce-Rogers associates the increased tension between Tbilisi and Moscow by 2008 with the competition between Russia and Georgia to control the regions of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Adjara. Russian policies towards the regions made Tbilisi suspicious about the prospect of *de facto* annexation of the region by Russia. By 2008, Russia had handed out 70,000 of 80,000 South Ossetian residents Russian citizenship, and two-third of the budget revenue of South Ossetia was a direct contribution of Moscow (2013, 348). In fact, before 2008, Russia had made it clear that it considered South Ossetians as Russian citizens and would intervene in case of an attack by Georgia. Hence by invading South Ossetia and by attacking Russian bases and peacekeepers, Georgia provided the perfect excuse and legitimacy for Russia to intervene (Antonenko 2008, 23&24). From the conflicts of the early 1990s to 2008, Russian policies have made itself even closer to the region, while they have remained alienated from Georgia.

In his summary of the subjective discourses regarding the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, Broers (2014, 275&276) underlines the divergence in chosen levels;

The Georgian discourse describes a Russo–Georgian conflict, informed by categories of the Cold War and “color revolutions,” a narrative of empire, violent Russian bullying and neo-imperialism, and selective readings of the past. The Abkhazian discourse describes a Georgian–Abkhazian conflict, informed by internal colonialism, violent Georgian aggression, exclusion from the global community by the “friends of Georgia,” and by similarly selective interpretations of history. Russian discourse focuses on a Russian–Western antagonism, informed by a sense of vulnerability and outrage at Western treatment of Russia in other arenas. In the Russian state narrative, Georgia, due to its European self-identity and Atlanticist

leanings, becomes a Western accomplice and a convenient scapegoat upon which Russia can vent its frustration.

While the historical narrative could clarify some aspects of the discourses that emerged before the conflict, such as the Georgian perspective towards the Russian imperial aspirations or Abkhazian feeling of alienation due to Georgian nationalism, it fails to accommodate all the ideational dynamics regarding their perspective of self and other. Historical narrative as a projection of the international interaction on ideational aspects needs to be complemented with the domestic dynamics. Within the scope of the narrative summarized above, the domestic dynamics enables the analysis to figure out the transformation of Russian discourse towards democracy and westernization as well as towards Georgia`s devotion to European identity and close relations with the West.

3.2. Leaders and Domestic Dynamics

The objective of the section is to provide an analysis of the domestic socialization with a focus on the national elites acting within domestic structural forces. In relation to the historical narrative explored beforehand, the analysis intends to inquiry about the change and continuity in the ideational dynamics. Within this framework, the object of analysis is the ways leaders construct and utilize the ideational discourses and how they are affected by them within the domestic structural limitations. Naturally, the indigenous dynamics of Russia and Georgia are scrutinized separately, lest with extensive reference to the international interaction guided by the historical narrative established before.

3.2.1. Russia

As mentioned throughout the theoretical debate, almost a stereotypical argument for the constructivist criticism towards realism is its failure to anticipate the end of the Cold War. Although the constructivist criticism for the

issue of change is generally misperceived as focused on realists' inability to predict a particular change; namely, the end of the Cold War, the real focus has been on the fact that prevailing theories did not presume any prospect of change in the first place (Guzzini 2000, 155). The end of the Cold War and Gorbachev's 'new thinking' indeed determined a critical juncture for the ideational framework for Russia. It symbolized a transition in terms of the definition of self and the relations with the West. However, the ideational debate of Russia is not exclusive to the transformation that prompted the end of the Cold War. Trenin arranges the stages in Russian foreign policy in relation to the country's relations with the West. The first stage, which lasted until around 2001, is identified with Russia's pursuit of integration with the West and becoming part of the civilized world. Throughout the second stage, from September 11 to the 'color revolutions', Russia instead invested in alliance with the West. Lastly, in the period following the color revolutions, Russia pursued to be equals with the United States and Europe (2009, 37). Kumar similarly highlights three different phases of the transition of the Russian foreign policy, lest with different cornerstones. In the first phase, from 1991 to 1995, Russia strove to be recognized as a natural member of Europe and adopted rapid economic reforms through shock therapy and political reforms by means of a new constitution and foundation of a super-presidential system. Western financial, technological and ideological support equipped the backbone of the reforms. The second phase, which lasted till 2006, signified the questioning of the American hegemony and insistence on multipolarity. For this purpose, Russia pursued alliances in the East and near abroad in order to balance the dominance of the West. In the last phase, Russian foreign policy witnessed series of interventions and language of protestation instead of cautious diplomacy (2018, 210&211).

Even though it is possible to present more debates regarding the phases of the transition in Russian foreign policy, regardless of the divergence in the outlets suggested in their analysis, they mostly indicate the preeminence of

the contested ideological traditions of Russian identity. As notably put forward by Tsygankov&Tsygankov(2010, 664);

Defining ideology as a systematic presentation of Self, Other, and their relationships, we argue that the Russian theory of International Relations is grounded in three main ideological traditions. We refer to these traditions as Westernism, Statism, and Civilizationism; each emphasizes a category of, respectively, the West, the independent state, and a distinct civilization as the desired identification of the Russian self. Although these ideologies have recovered their currency after the Soviet disintegration, they have their roots in the history of Russia's relations with Europe and the 19th-century debates about the 'Russian idea.'

Rather than assuming a fixed national interest in outlining the foreign policy attitude, the impact of the defining ideology on national identity and national interest shall be the basis of understanding of change and continuity in foreign policy. As the ideational framework is mainly defined as the representations of self and other, it naturally embodies a capacity to characterize the general foreign policy perspective.

Westernizer discourse underlines liberal values such as market economy, democracy and human rights, and explore participation in western community and institutions. The ascend of westernizer discourse was initiated with Gorbachev`s 'new thinking' and mostly signified throughout the period of President Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. In contrast, civilizationists, reminiscent of the 19th-century Slavophiles, emphasize Russian cultural values as opposed to Western ideas and embrace a confrontational stance towards the West. Unlike westernizers, who attach little importance to the former republics, promote the expansion of the Russian Empire. Lastly, statism essentially pursues a strong centralized state and stresses military and economic capabilities for defending Russia`s sovereignty. They do not necessarily share the anti-Western stance of the civilizationist perspective, though they favor firm executive order over the democratic institutions. Primakov`s great power balancing and Putin`s great power pragmatism signified the preeminence of statism in Russian foreign policy (Tsygankov 2016).

The preeminence of specific discourse is generally associated with national elites. This overlay is logical considering the Russian centralized state structure that attains considerable power to the executive over other branches of governance. "Russia's system has been described in a variety of ways: quasi-democracy, semi-authoritarian, superpresidential" (Bryce-Rogers 2013). Simão (2012, 483) underlines the Soviet legacy of the centralized structure of decision making and asserts the continuity of the centralized system of decisions, despite a brief period of dispersion of power in the immediate post-Cold War period. Via analysis of the Soviet and Russian state structure in a historical line, Solnick (1998, 59–61) delineates the ad hoc nature of the Russian federal policy, which is essentially defined by the personalities of the particular leaders.

Notwithstanding the consolidation in decision-making structure and central position of leaders in foreign policy decisions, they are not exempt from the domestic structural conditions, the need for interaction and negotiation with other actors, and the concern with social legitimacy. Different ideological traditions and various images regarding the nation's identity are represented and supported by different coalitions that seek recognition from the significant other and preeminence in addressing the local conditions and interpret the nature of the external world. In that regard, the main objective for the identity coalitions is to achieve social recognition, unlike interest coalitions that pursue maximization of wealth or power (Tsygankov 2016, 16). The coalitions might consist of domestic institutional actors with the capacity to affect foreign policy decisions. Aside from the president, Foreign Ministry and Presidential Administration, the Ministry of Defense, and the Russian Security Council are assigned to define the foreign policy direction of the country, which requires keeping a constant balance of power among different branches (Simão 2012, 484). Moreover, the military industrialists, the army, and security services were significant, particularly concerning the later triumph of the statist thinking (Tsygankov 2016, 19).

With the domestic structural conditions in mind, the transition of Russia's foreign policy mindset and its ideational framework needs to be examined historically in greater detail. While the general character of the transition is analogous with the different phases outlined above, the dynamics of the transition in the foreign policy perspective enables a better grasp of Russia's historical narrative by the August conflict. In that sense, the analysis shall focus on not only the Russian disposition towards the West but also the attitude toward former Soviet space.

3.2.1.1. The dynamics of transition from Gorbachev to Putin

The war in the Caucasus and its consequences have ended a twenty-year cycle in the development of Russia's foreign policy and international relations. Mikhail Gorbachev's famous speech to the United Nations in December 1988 initiated that cycle when the general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) set out a program of practical steps that fundamentally altered the goals and the content of Soviet foreign policy (Trenin 2009, 37).

The abrupt and unanticipated end of the Cold War initiated a line of debate within international relations theories, which contributed to the rise of constructivism through its criticism towards neorealism. Apart from the importance of the transition in outlining the constructivist perspective on change and continuity in a general sense, it is also paramount for understanding the posture of the Russian ideational framework in relation to the West and former Soviet space, thence for the peculiar purpose of Russia's perspective concerning the August conflict in its historical development.

Snyder entitles Gorbachev's reforms as 'counterrevolution' for not only aiming to reverse the USSR's core structures but also for being a revolution from above as opposed to the generic meaning of revolution as a bottom-up, mass-based social upheaval. Likewise, in foreign policy, Gorbachev's counterrevolution encompassed the reversal of the principle of internalization; i.e., justification of internal centralization and repression through external threats, and intended to conceive a friendly external world that would

engender change in identity, internal decentralization, and liberalization (2005, 60). The reforms implied an identity change in the sense that it aimed to alter the country's image as well as the perception towards the significant other. Blum (1993, 387) associates the transition with the change in the core beliefs concerning self-image, the image of allies, the image of adversaries, the nature of international politics, the flow of history, and the nature of the change.

However, the emergence and rise of the ideational dynamics are not exempt from the domestic institutional structure and limitations. Snyder (1987, 109) underlines the importance of institutional change in line with the requirements of intensive development as the main driving force for the changes of the Gorbachev era. Gorbachev altered the institutional structure and promoted domestic constituency in line with the needs of objective requirements. Civilian defense intellectuals, reformist ideologues, liberal intelligentsia substituted the military-industrial complex, old-style ideologues, and autarkic industrial interests. However, the approach reduces the ideational dynamics to mere pragmatic strategic choices rather than a variable that makes the necessity of the change visible to the actors. In other words, the perspective regards the domestic and international need for development as an objective variable that led to the rise of new intellectuals and institutions, thus strip ideational dynamics of its autonomy.

Checkel (1993), in line with the methodology pursued beforehand, proposes a framework that integrates the structural conditions with the autonomous existence of the ideational foundation. He indicates the autonomous existence of the ideological basis of the new thinking by locating it within the Soviet academic writing in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. However, the pursuit of the ideological venture occurred within the structural conditions, mostly through swaying the balance of power to the favor of the reformist coalition. Although conservatives acknowledged the crisis of the Soviet Union and the need for economic development in a likely manner, their proposed

solution was to preserve the cultural tradition and resist Western influence (Tsygankov 2016, 41). Hence, the reforms faced the opposition of the conservatives who regarded them as unilateral concessions to the West on matters of security (Kumar 2018, 214). On institutional grounds, Gorbachev cut down the influence of the military, which had stood as an embodiment of the traditional understanding, and redirected most of the security affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and reformist civilian elites, like Shevardnadze (R. S. Snyder 2005, 64).

The pattern of competition among ideological camps that has been reflected through the institutional structure persisted through the following periods. The clash reveals itself best during the Yeltsin era. While Gorbachev had relatively succeeded in the consolidation of power and achieved structural transformations that enabled the realization of reforms, the Yeltsin era was marked by the continuous struggle between westernizers and statist. Hereof, despite the continuation of westernizing aspirations, the Yeltsin era could also be regarded as the period of transition to the statist rule.

Two main principles epitomized Yeltsin's foreign policy aspirations; participation in the 'community of civilized states' and the provision of international support for internal transformation (Timmermann 1992, 163). Yeltsin's foreign policy represented a continuation of the Gorbachev era in terms of its aspirations for westernization, lest with divergences in emphasis. Nevertheless, the period witnessed a continuous struggle for supremacy by way of transformation of the structural conditions and limitations. While the failure of the supremacy caused concessions conceded to the statist policies, particularly in the latter stages of the Yeltsin era, the failure of the economic reforms led to the return of the statist policies in the following period.

"In the absence of effective central control, and in the new climate of extreme ideological pluralism, bureaucratic rivalries with roots in the Soviet period acquired a more dangerous character" (Malcolm and Pravda 1996,

545&546). The draft constitution established the matter of the first relevant conflict with the legislature that was dominated by the communists, hyper-nationalists, and gradualists. The controversy concerning the limits of presidential power finally led to the bombing of the parliament by Yeltsin to oust the legislators (Kumar 2018, 214). The failure to establish central control hindered the full projection of the ideational core on policy choices, which created an image of inconsistency. While earlier years are marked with the liberal emphasis in governance, manifested itself best through extensive autonomy towards republics and 'federation treaty' (Solnick 1998, 59&60), the nationalist tone started to gain ground in domestic politics leading to more assertive policies towards the Commonwealth of Independent States(CIS) (Timmermann 1992, 164).

The assertive policies of the late-Yeltsin era with the escalation of the nationalist tones led to the arguments that Russian foreign policy from Yeltsin to Putin did not incorporate any fundamental change. Mankoff (2009, 4) argues that "the assertive, narrowly self-interested foreign policy that has characterized Russia during the Putin-Medvedev years is merely the culmination of a process that began over a decade earlier, during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin". Nevertheless, rather than regarding the Putin era as a continuation of Yeltsin`s foreign policies, it is more relevant to consider the late-Yeltsin era as a period of transition in which, despite Yeltsin`s westernizing leaning, the lack of the consolidation of power and the growing influence of statist coalition within the state structure altered the course of foreign policy choices. In fact, "the identity of Putin`s Russia crucially depends on the negation of Yeltsin`s 'democracy' as a period of chaos and destruction" (Morozov 2008, 156).

Rising nationalism and internal political pressure engendered by deteriorating economic conditions, widespread social discontent and a threat posed to state security by the secessionist movements in the Caucasus brought Putin to power (Kasymov 2012, 58).

The failure of the economic reforms of the early 1990s, high level of corruption, and unrealized promises of Western support had generated disappointment, gradually curtailing public support (Kumar 2018).

Akin to the pattern articulated before, Simão (2012, 487) specifies *ad hoc* policymaking, the central role of individuals, and inter-institutional and individual bargaining as the main tenets of the domestic context Putin inherited. Hence analogous to the analysis of the Gorbachev and Yeltsin period, the analysis of the Putin era shall focus on the domestic structural limitations besides the personality and ideational sentiments of Putin. Following his election, Putin managed to gradually consolidate his power by restricting the autonomy of the regional governments limiting the influence of the legislative branch (Sadri and Burns 2010, 133). Although Götz (2017, 231), arguing against the deterministic analyses based on individuals, asserts that Putin was not exempt from domestic political pressures and elite struggles, the domestic structure was more favorable for Putin, particularly compared to the Yeltsin era.

Above all else, Putin obtained the backing and assistance of the security community, who perceived international relations as a field of contestation among the few powerful countries for power and influence (Trenin 2016). Moreover, contrary to the previous administrations, the military comprised a critical base of support for Putin, though he gradually established civilian control over the military and the Defence Ministry and strengthened executive grip even more (Bryce-Rogers 2013, 343–45). Moreover, Putin enjoyed unprecedented public support of ordinary people based upon his foreign policy of great-power revival, and Western critical response to Russia's assertive foreign policy only enhanced this base of support (Trenin 2016). The economic success, chiefly driven by the rising oil revenues, established one of the core reasons for his popular support and success (Sadri and Burns 2010, 133). Götz (2017, 231) exhibits that this support was not limited to ordinary people, but even the most critical elites from either side of the

political spectrum -from neo-communists to nationalists- supported the assertive policies, particularly towards the former Soviet region. Thus, in terms of the domestic conditions, Putin not only emerged into a favorable ideological environment that enabled him to achieve a base of support among ordinary people as well as political elites, but he also managed to change the domestic structure of governance that enabled him to act within fewer constraints and pursue policies in line with his personal beliefs.

The shift in Russia`s foreign policy from Yeltsin`s soft confrontation and partnership in the economic and political field to pragmatic diplomacy and military demonstrations, along with strong rhetoric that marked Putin`s foreign policy, could be explained through Putin`s personal perceptions and his patriotic and nationalist convictions (Kasymov 2012, 59).

Putin`s ideational narrative –the story of Russian culture and experience that Putin, and Russians themselves, appear to have internalized, and that is now increasingly reflected in foreign policy- has evolved in tandem with the decline of Russia`s relations with the US, and with what might be labelled a “heightened siege mentality” among the Russian leadership. Putinism, if there is such a thing, is becoming more nationalist in nature and reflects the feeling that Russia is under threat from a hostile West bent on undermining Russian interests (Roberts 2017, 34)

Analogous to the Gorbachev and Yeltsin era and westernizer ideational framework, the significant other for Putin`s foreign policy has also been the West, particularly the US. Two apparent concepts, multipolarity and sovereign democracy, embodied the nature of the Russian foreign policy towards the West.

3.2.1.2.Multipolarity

“Russia shall seek to achieve a multi-polar system of international relations that really reflects the diversity of the modern world with its great variety of interests”(The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2000). The discourse of multipolarity has found its emphasis on all of the consecutive foreign policy concepts as a way to challenge the US hegemony in the post-Cold War era. Russia conceived multipolarity as a prerequisite to have a

respected role in international politics. For this purpose, Russia sought cooperation among powerful countries like China, India, and Brazil and promoted multilateral organizations (Kumar 2018, 218&219).

The emphasis on multipolarity reflected itself on Russia`s approach to international organizations. In his famous Munich speech as an embodiment of the emphasis on multipolarity, Putin (2007) underlined the multilateral mechanisms of the UN in taking legitimate action. On the other hand, he criticized the transformation of the OSCE into an instrument that serves the interests of specific countries. He followed an even harsher line of criticism towards the expansion of NATO to Russia`s borders, arguing that it does not serve any purpose in responding to the nature of global threats. The admission of the Baltic States⁵ to NATO, along with the US proposal to place components of a missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland, marked a point of deterioration in Russia`s relations with the West (Spechler 2010, 38).

Ziegler (2012), in line with the constructivist perspective, points out that Russia`s contention with the NATO expansion stems from its aspired image of great power rather than the likelihood of a military threat posed by NATO;

As the United States presented the single greatest threat to Russia`s claim to being a great power, the United States (and to a lesser its European NATO allies) became the external (hostile) Other. This helps explain the continued Russian preoccupation with opposing American unilateralism, the opposition to ballistic missile defense and NATO expansion, and the focus on nuclear weapons modernization (Ziegler 2012, 409).

Hence, NATO enlargement should be considered as a part of a broader framework of Russia`s opposition to the unipolar world order under the US hegemony. That opposition mainly stemmed from the statist ideational framework, which is mostly shaped through Russia`s relations with the West.

⁵ Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, and Romania joined NATO in 2004
<https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/03-march/e0329a.htm>

3.2.1.3. 'Sovereign Democracy' and Color Revolutions

Another concept that emerged in defining the nature of the relations with the West is 'sovereign democracy'. Although the concept is generally debated within the framework of relations of Russia with the European Union (Averre 2007; Makarychev 2008), it is necessary to analyze the emergence of the concept as a civilizationist-statist reaction to developments in the former Soviet space, particularly towards the color revolutions.

Although a detailed definition and intellectual conceptualization of the term is beyond the scope of the research, the concept signified "a desire to defend an internally determined path of political development" (Tsygankov 2016, 184) and "a commitment to European values on Russia's terms" (Simão 2012, 490). However, the domestic intellectual conceptualization is reflected upon the global positioning, reflecting a civilizational position, and affected Russia's posture to the former Soviet space.

Makarychev illustrates this ideational positioning of sovereign democracy, through *triple negation* compared to three distinct categories (2008, 51);

First, it presupposes a certain distinction from another possible logical category, sovereign non-democracies, such as China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc.

Second, it establishes contrasting relations with what presumably might be dubbed non-sovereign democracies, best exemplified, perhaps, by the "New European" countries usually described in Russian discourse as being quick to give up their independence to both the EU and NATO.

Third, it draws a line with what might hypothetically be called non-sovereign non-democracies, the worst possible category in the list.

Russia's policies concerning the former Soviet space as a response to Western influence is critically informed by the second category. The logic perceived the *artificial* establishment of democratic systems outside the borders of the Euro-Atlantic world as a Western conspiracy and established the intellectual framework in opposing the color revolutions (Gordadze 2009, 46). The core aspect of Russia's opposition was to the imposition of the

single, unified standard of democracy established taking the US and EU as prototypes on all other civilizations (Morozov 2008, 172). In line with this ideational framework, starting with the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, Russia perceived the Western support on color revolutions throughout the CIS as an attempt to surround Russia with pro-Western regimes and ultimately provoke regime change in Russia itself (Trenin 2007, as cited in; Spechler 2010, 37).

Considering Georgia`s aspirations to be a member of the NATO and the emphasis on democratization and westernization, it became the focal point of the ideational debates established in relation to Russia`s self-positioning in global politics. However, this position was informed through Russia`s domestic debates within an ideational framework, rather than a natural continuation of great power politics. Although Russia`s opposition to the unipolar world order and reaction to the westernization and democratization in the former Soviet space creates a sense of emphasis on the structural power politics and geopolitics, respectively; they are; instead, an outcome of domestic debates about Russia`s identity informed through interaction with the West. The rise of assertive foreign policy is associated with the failure of the westernization project of immediate post-Cold War years and the rise of the statist and civilizationist perspectives, rather than an inevitable outcome of Russia`s increasing power and influence in the global balance of power.

4.2.2. Georgia; Enduring Commitment to Europeanization

While the analysis of the Russian identity and foreign policy is an analysis of change, displaying radical differences from Gorbachev to Putin with subject to the domestic structural constraints, Georgian national identity reveals, instead, a trend of continuity. The trend mainly stemmed from the persistence of the established European image of self and opposition to Russian `imperialism` as significant other.

Georgia's relations with the West are an integral part of the debates concerning the conflict between Russia and Georgia. The Rose Revolution and Georgia's aspirations for the NATO membership had been critical cornerstones leading to the conflict. However, Georgia's devoted relations with the West are generally interpreted through pragmatic security calculations against Russia. Although security calculations had certainly been an essential part of Georgia's relations with the West, particularly concerning NATO membership, the devotion should be analyzed within a broader ideational framework that has vilified Russia beyond concerns of security. For this purpose, the analysis would question the pragmatic return of the devotion to the European identity and committed relations with the West.

The formation of the relatively rigid image of Russia as hostile other has been analyzed through the historical narrative of Georgia with particular focus on the experience of the DRG and post-Soviet aspirations for independence. Georgian historiography associated the European identity with Christianity and created an image of Muslim other with reference to the medieval periods (S. Jones 2003, 91). However, the meaning of the European identity and the level of commitment to it has been subject to transformation. Although the exclusive emphasis of being part of Europe has always been part of the prevalent discourse, the nature of association acquired different meanings. Above all else, following the Bolshevik revolution, Russia's image for the non-Bolshevik social democrats transformed into an Asiatic state who had no part in modern Europe, i.e., other in the Western discourse (S. Jones 2003).

The use of western discourse for the vilification of Russia was nowhere more evident than Gamsakhurdia era. Gamsakhurdia was elected the president of the newly independent Georgian Republic, relying on the increasing anti-Russian, anti-communist sentiments among Georgians following the 1989 events caused by the mass demonstrations as a reaction to the Abkhazian secessionist demands. His main objective was to 'de-communize' Georgia and liberate the country from any Russian association (Kotchikian 2004, 36).

Gamsakhurdia was in line with the *irreconcilables*, i.e., radical activists who rejected existing political structures as representations of the 'regime of occupation' (Nodia 1996).

"Gamsakhurdia benefited from a post-independence wave of revolutionism among the Georgian population, which had expectations that finally the West would pay its debt to Georgia and release it from the Russian embrace" (S. Jones 2003, 95). Gamsakhurdia managed to combine his anti-Russian rhetoric with popular aspirations of westernization. However, his western aspirations were limited to his objective of gaining Western support against possible Russian aggression, yet his genuine interest was in a common Caucasian home (Beacháin and Coene 2014, 929). This superficial interest in the European identity explains the problem of endured tensions between Russia and Georgia, despite the ostensible emphasis on the European identity on both sides and relatively benign policies towards former Soviet republics during the early years of Yeltsin. To be concise, the ideational framework for Gamskhurdia was dominated by anti-Russian sentiments overwhelming any aspirations towards the West.

Contrary to the radical idealism of the Gamskhurdia period, Shevardnadze's policies signified traditional pragmatism seeking a regional balance of interest. He tried to build good relations with Iran, China, Central Asia as well as Russia. He also tried to end Georgia's reliance on the West on matters of security (S. Jones 2003, 103). Gordadze (2009, 31&32) associates his approach to foreign policy with his political career as Soviet foreign minister during the Gorbachev era. However, the second half of the 1990s witnessed a pro-Western shift in the foreign policy orientation following his failure to resolve the problem of Russian support on separatist regions despite his incorporation of Georgia in the CIS in 1993 (Kupatadze and Zeitzoff 2019, 4).

In 1994, Georgia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace Program (PfP) and in 1999 the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP). A Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was signed between Georgia and the European Union, which went into force in 1999 (Kakachia and Minesashvili 2015, 174).

However, the Shevardnadze era is marked by devastated infrastructure, divided nation along the ethnic lines, bad economic performance and, above all else, corruption (Mitchell 2009, 172). These subjects became the main arguments of the Rose Revolution that brought Saakashvili to power. Subsequent years witnessed rapid reforms focusing on economic liberalization, anti-corruption and institution building. However, the extensive liberalization and state-building processes are coupled with the strengthening of the executive branch in relation to the legislative and judiciary (Nilsson 2009, 90).

Cheterian (2009, 158) outlines the Rose revolution as a dual project of modernizing Georgia and bringing territorial unification. Restoration of territorial integrity was Saakashvili's top priority, along with economic reforms. In fact, Saakashvili reflected his commitment to liberalism on his resolution of the conflict by arguing that Georgia's economic development would eventually appeal to breakaway regions. The strategy proved successful with the Adjara case through which Georgia supported the pro-government protesters inside and applied an economic embargo of the region and military displays around the border (Nilsson 2009, 90).

A rough examination of Georgia's commitment to European identity from Gamsakhurdia to Saakashvili reveals the endurance of the ideational dynamics lest with diverging meanings and functions in accordance with the leaders' beliefs.

Since Georgia gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, its leadership has at different times appeared as: fervently nationalistic; a quasi-continuation of the former communist regime; progressively neo-liberal; and often as a hybrid of the three (Tatum 2009, 159).

Tatum's respective description of the leaders' characteristics guides the variations in the meanings of the European identity.

Gamsakhurdia`s nationalism was practically founded upon the radical opposition to Russia. Hence Gamsakhurdia utilized the discourse of European identity in creating a dichotomy between Georgia and Russia. In that sense, more than emphasizing the modern, European and democratic self, he employed the discourse in constructing the significant other inversely; a non-European, communist, primitive Russia. Shevardnadze, as the pragmatic statesman of balance, chose to employ the discourse to attract European aid only after his strategy of appeasement towards Russia. Naturally, the most fervent supporter of the European identity was Saakashvili, who tried to employ European references in every aspect of his quest for the modernization of the country.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The research aims to put forward an alternative analytical framework for the analysis of conflict through the insights of constructivism. However, the research does not treat constructivism as a grand theory which not only designates where to look as a methodological determinant but also defines what to find in advance. On the contrary, the analysis employs constructivist insights to determine a methodological focus and roadmap with no presumption of a predetermined outcome for the analysis. In that sense, the analysis, above all else, aims to demonstrate the utilization of the constructivist framework on a case study through the development of the methodological guideline without resorting to any fixed postulation for an inevitable conclusion.

The research applies the proposed alternative analytical framework on the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict. That is mainly because the conflict is construed through an extensive reference with the great power politics reminiscent of the Cold War. Pertinent to the narrative of grand theory, the conflict is depicted through Russia's desire to preserve her regional sphere of authority against Western influence. Hence, Russian national interest is settled within the framework of structural power maximization discourse in which the West, particularly the US, has naturally been acknowledged as the primary opponent. Moreover, Russia's recent dissent towards the unipolar post-Cold War world order and Georgia's ever closer relations with the West validates the strength of such analysis in the scholarly literature. Within this extensive global structural focus, Georgia's national interest is mostly overlooked or

regarded within a bandwagoning policy of balancing against Russian aspirations. In that sense, the cause of the conflict is perceived as a result of Russia's assertive policies in challenging the growing Western influence in the region and Georgia's miscalculations about Western support.

However, the research raises questions on the mainstream assumptions regarding the causes of the war using the methodological framework established through the insights of constructivism. In line with the constructivist emphasis on identity, the analysis focuses on the interaction among actors in both the international and domestic realm to discover the ideational determinants of conflict. For this purpose, the methodology of the research establishes an agent-structure debate to justify the intentional disregard for the 'level of analysis' problem. The international aspect of the interaction is explored through the historical narrative as a reflection of the ways the actors perceive the nature of relations. The narrative establishes the causes of hostile relations and mutual distrust between Georgia and Russia, as well as Georgia and her minority communities. The analysis of the narratives relocates the emphasis from structural analysis of international interaction to the nature of bilateral relations.

The analyses that reveal extensive focus on the structural balance of power naturally pay little attention to Georgia's interest and perceptions. On the other hand, Georgia's national interest and security concerns are regarded as central variables leading to the war. Above all else, the research puts forward an analysis of the Georgian identity and her perceptions and policies towards her national minorities and towards Russia through the examination of the historical narrative.

In that regard, the trauma of the DRG created a turning point in the transformation of the image of Russia as Georgia's definition of hostile other. In that sense, Georgia's obsession with Russian imperialism and construction of the security concerns in opposition to the Russian threat is not about the

structural power calculations but the legacy of bilateral experiences. Similarly, the invasion of the DRG as a social democratic state with western values by the Bolshevik Soviet Union enabled the emergence of a discourse of Western identity as opposed to the primitive, communist, and assertive Russia. Hence, Georgia`s devotion to western identity was not an outcome of the bandwagoning strategy within the global and regional balance of power calculations but was the very core of national identity and interest defining self and other even at times when it was against rational calculations. In that sense, the impact of the trauma and discourse of the DRG on modern Georgia`s national interest and security approach challenges the materialist and rationalist assumptions of mainstream perspectives. To have a more specific example, the fact that Georgia initiated her attack on South Ossetia despite all the warnings of Western countries, particularly the US, that they would not come to her aid in case of any Russian response, which had been quite likely considering Russian warnings, proves the invalidity of the analyses based on bandwagoning explanations that perceive Georgia`s devotion to western identity within a framework of Georgia`s desire to guarantee Western support against Russian aggression. Although security alliances, like membership to NATO, was an essential part of Georgia`s westernizing ambitions, it should be regarded as a part of the grandeur project of becoming part of the Western community of nations.

Soviet ethnicity policies based on primordialist notions of nationality enabled the construction and crystallization of ethnic identities. Moreover, the Soviet hierarchy of nations provided a ground for conflicting perspectives on the nature of the post-Soviet independent states. While Georgia defined the borders of the newly-independent state with reference to the borders of Georgian SSR, South Ossetia and Abkhazia feared that they might lose their autonomous status and rights. With the end of the Cold War, Russia formed the imagery of Georgia`s significant other constructed as an offensive and assertive empire, while South Ossetia and Abkhazia regarded Russia as a patron against Georgian claims. Thence, USSR federal structure established

patterns of socialization among the parties of the conflict and crystallized not only self-identification but also the image of other as a threat or partner. While the Georgian narrative underlined the disentanglement from Russian influence and imperial aspirations through national unification defined with reference to the political borders of the Soviet era, the South Ossetian narrative opposed this through the discourse of internal colonization and exclusion. Although this tri-partite relation and emerged national identifications and claims were at the center of the conflict, the extensive focus on the structural power politics led to a relative disregard for the interests of the less powerful actors.

Although historical narrative, as a subjective reflection of the international interaction, provides an analytical ground for mutual identification of the states, the construction of the ideational determinants is not exempt from the domestic interaction. In that regard, the research differentiates itself from the analyses that embrace a black-box approach to state and foreign policy analysis. The methodology regards state as a structure in itself, rather than an independent actor within the international structure. In that sense, the beliefs and personalities of the national elites and domestic structural constraints they faced establishes analytical focus. The analysis helps a better grasp concerning the dynamics of change and continuity in the foreign policy of the countries. The examination of the domestic dynamics focuses their evolving perspective towards the West as a shared aspect of the relations between Russia and Georgia.

As opposed to the structural realism that reserves the prospect of change to the changes in the balance of power structure only, the research underlines the constructivist emphasis attained to the ideational determinants of change and continuity. While the end of the Cold War turned into a classical debate between neo-realists and constructivists regarding the issue of change, the research follows through this debate in searching for the ideational determinants of the revival of Cold War mentality in Russian foreign policy.

Starting with the 'new thinking' proposed by Gorbachev, Russia has initiated a cycle of transformation in self-image constructed in relation to the West. The dynamics of change are explored through analysis of the contesting domestic ideational coalitions. In that sense, the examination reveals the diffusion of ideas into the institutional structure of the country, which affects the applicability of desired change within the domestic context. In line with this argument, the erratic foreign policy behavior that signified the Yeltsin era is explained through the endurance of the competition. In that sense, the era symbolized a period of transition from westernizer transition to statist dominance. Contrary to the Yeltsin era that suffered from the absence of consolidated power and preeminence of ongoing institutional and ideological rivalry, Putin`s term marked the total dominance of statist ideology. In that sense, the analysis associates the realist-minded foreign policy perspective of the Putin era with the preeminence of the statist ideology instead of considering it as a natural outcome of the changing balance of power. Although the period did not witness a radical shift in the balance of power, the analysis asserts that post-Cold War Russian foreign policy has gone through radical transformation depending on the dominance of different ideational coalition.

While the examination of Russia`s domestic ideational dynamics and associated analysis of foreign policy marked with change until the absolute dominance of the statist ideology throughout the Putin era, Georgia experienced a constant devotion to the European identity. Although the preeminence of the European identity is most visible after the second half of the 1990s, reaching its zenith with the Rose Revolution and presidency of Saakashvili, Gamakhurdia also embraced the European identity in order to cohort his anti-Russian position.

The comparative analysis of the ideational framework reveals the constant conflicting positions. Although both Russia and Georgia had overlapping periods dominated by pro-Western identity and foreign policy, anti-Russian

sentiments dominant in Georgian discourse at the time might have prevented a common ground. Following the second half of the 1990s, Georgia and Russia had followed clashing views and paths concerning Western identity.

Within this ideational framework, despite the veracity of the concerns on the part of Russia regarding her geopolitical encirclement and emerged emphasis for multipolar world order, the changing foreign policy mentality did not emerge as a result of the changing balance of power but reflected an ideational positioning stemming from her domestic development of a particular discourse. In fact, the research practically reverses the causal direction found in the mainstream literature by arguing that it was not the changing global positioning within the balance of power structure that led to offensive foreign policy attitude on the part of Russia. However, such policies had been followed as a way to pursue a new position in the world order, a need that was mainly defined through domestically formed ideational debates with reference to the West. In that sense, the 2008 Russian Georgia War should be interpreted as an assertion of this identity on the part of Russia.

On the other hand, Georgia`s offensive towards South Ossetia with no prospect of Western support and despite the certainty of Russia's reaction shall lead the analysis to question the assumptions of rational choice in decision-making processes. On the contrary, it is possible to grasp the Georgian decision to initiate the war by attacking South Ossetia with her devotion to national unity and the perception of constant threat from Russia. As has been examined through the historical narrative, these sentiments have had their roots in Georgia`s historical narrative established in relation to Russia and her breakaway regions.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

Beş Gün Savaşı ya da Ağustos Savaşı olarak da bilinen 2008 Rusya-Gürcistan Savaşı dünya siyaseti üzerinde bu kadar kısa süren bir savaşa göre çok daha derin bir etkiye sahiptir. Savaşa atfedilen bu önem için jeopolitikten enerji politikasına kadar pek çok neden sıralanabilirse de, savaşı merkezi yapan Soğuk Savaş sonrası düzen bağlamında atfedilen küresel anlamdı. Çatışma, iki kutuplu güç siyasetinin ve yenilenmiş bir Soğuk Savaş yapısının gelişinin bir uyarısı olarak algılandı.

Dünya düzeniyle ilgili bu endişe, bu çatışmayı küresel olarak bu kadar önemli kılan şey olmasına rağmen, analizlerin küresel boyuta ve iki kutuplu güç politikalarına yoğun bir şekilde odaklanmasına ve savaşın diğer boyutlarının ve aktörlerinin ihmal edilmesine yol açtı. Ayrıca küresel güç siyasetini merkezileştiren böylesi bir bakış açısı doğal olarak realist bir teorik çerçeve içinde kendini gösterdi.

Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın amacı, savaşın küresel güç politikası dışında kalan boyutlarının ve aktörlerinin farkında, çağdaş literatürde çoğunlukla gözden kaçan veya dağınık ve ilişkisiz bir şekilde analiz edilen etkenlerinin de kapsayan bir analiz sunmaktır.

Çeşitli analiz düzeylerinden farklı belirleyicileri kapsamaya çalışırken, çalışma konstrüktivist bir bakış açısından faydalanmaktadır. Analiz, konstrüktivizmin aktörlerin sosyalleşmesi ve kimliklerin karşılıklı olarak tanımlanmasına yönelik odağından yararlanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu kapsamda çatışmaya

giden sürecin fikri ve kimliksel temellerine odaklanan bir teorik çerçevede analiz sunulması hedeflenmiştir. Bu amaçla araştırma öncelikle konstrüktivist teori üzerine genel bir tanıtım ve tartışma sunduktan sonra bu tartışma etrafında teorinin vakaya uygulanabilmesini sağlamak amacıyla metodolojik bir çerçeve de sunmaktadır. Metodolojik çerçeve uluslararası ve ulusal kimlik dinamiklerinin konstrüktivizmin sosyal ilişkiler vurgusu üzerinden incelenmesine odaklanmaktadır. Bu sosyal ilişkilerin incelenmesinde uluslararası düzeyde tarihsel anlatı kullanılırken, ulusal düzeyde ise liderler ve politik yapısal sınırlamalar üzerine bir incelemenin meşruiyeti sağlanmıştır. Bu metodolojik çerçeve doğrultusunda Rusya ve Gürcistan'ın kimliksel tartışmaları incelenmiş ve bu tartışma doğrultusunda ulusal çıkar ve dış politika konusunda alternatif bir bakış sunulmuştur.

Konstrüktivizm terimi, yalnızca içerdiği farklı varyantlardan değil, aynı zamanda tanımın temsil ettiği teori düzeyinden kaynaklanan çeşitli tanımları da geliştirmiştir. Tanım problemi aynı zamanda kimlerin bu başlık altına alınması sorunsalı çerçevesinde de bir tartışma içermektedir. Tanım bir yandan tüm rasyonalist olmayan bakış açılarını kapsayan bir şekilde ele alınırken, bir yandan da özel bir varyanta referansla kullanılarak daha spesifik bir kapsamda algılanabilmektedir. Ancak en genel ve kapsayıcı şekilde konstrüktivizm, materyal güçlerin aksine sosyal güçlere yoğun ilgi gösteren ve sosyal olarak inşa edilmiş bir dünyanın iddiası vurgusu ile tanımlanabilir. Konstrüktivist teori, bu nedenle, uluslararası ilişkilerin sosyal boyutlarına yaptığı vurgu, normlara, kurallara ve dile verdiği önem üzerinden ayırt edilirler. Bu nedenle, sosyal inşa fikri, hem zamansal hem de mekânsal anlamda sosyal bağlamdaki farklılıkları kucaklar ve dolayısıyla tek bir nesnel gerçeklik fikrine karşı çıkar. Bu vurgudan yola çıkarak, konstrüktivist araştırma programları dış dünyanın verili ya da bağımsız bir doğal varoluş değil, daha çok aktörlerin etkileşimi yoluyla oluşan bir insan ürünü olduğu şeklindeki ortak varsayıma işaret eder. Teorinin ayırıcı konumunu oluşturan konstrüktivistler arasındaki diğer bir ortak algı ise kimlik kavramına yaptıkları vurgudur. Dış dünya verili ve doğal olarak kabul edilmediği gibi, kimliğin

doğası da konstrüktivist çerçevede verili kabul edilmez. Konstrüktivist çerçevede kimlikler ve çıkarlar sabit ve verili olmadığı için, konstrüktivist çalışmaların odağı öncelikle bu kavramların sosyal etkileşim yoluyla inşa edilme yollarını araştırmaktır. Aktörler arasındaki sosyal etkileşim, benlik ve ötekinin imajını tanımlamada kurucu bir etkiye sahip olduğundan, aktörlerin başkaları ve kendileri hakkındaki algıları ilişkilerin doğasını etkiler. Kimlikler, kendinin ve diğerinin imgelerini tanımlayarak, belirli alanlardaki eylem seçimleri ve belirli aktörlerle ilgili olarak belirli bir menfaatleri veya tercihleri öne çıkarabilir.

Tanımsal tartışmaların yanında araştırma, konstrüktivizmin ontolojik ve epistemolojik 'orta yol' pozisyonu da konstrüktivizmin hem diğer teorik bakış açıları ile ayrımını aydınlatılabilmek hem de konstrüktivist varyantları arasındaki epistemolojik ve ontolojik pozisyonları açıklayabilmek açısından önemlidir. Ontolojik açıdan konstrüktivist yaklaşım, kolektif anlayışı küçümseyen bireyselci teorilere ve maddesel gerçekliğe deterministik bir rol yükleyen materyalistlere yönelik eleştirel referansla sürdürülür. Bu bağlamda konstrüktivizm düşünsel ve bütüncül bir ontolojik konuma yerleşmektedir. Düşünsel ontoloji, insan etkileşimini şekillendirmede düşünsel/fikirsal faktörlerin rolünü vurgularken, bütüncül yaklaşım kolektif olarak paylaşılanın bireysel eyleme göre önceliğini ifade eder.

Bununla birlikte, konstrüktivizmin ontolojik açıdan fikirlere ve gerçekliğin sosyal inşasına yaptığı bu vurgu, genel olarak ilişkilendirildiği idealizm ve post yapısalcılıktan farklıdır. Konstrüktivizm, fikirlerin bir boşlukta ortaya çıkma biçimini varsaymaktan ziyade tarihsel bir bağlam ve kurumsal yapı içinde inşa edilmesini savunması bakımından saf idealizmden farklıyken; post-yapısalcılık ile fark, materyalist güçlerin fikirsal/düşünsel etkenlerle birlikte kabul edilmesinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu ontolojik yaklaşım, anlamın önemini altını çizen ancak hali hazırda var olan (apriori) bir gerçekliği de kabul eden bir sınırlı inşa çerçevesinde algılanabilir. Sınırlı inşanın felsefi kökenleri, dile sadece gerçekliğin bir yansıması olmaktan çok kurucu bir rol

atfeden Wittengstein'in 'dilsel dönüşüm' kavramı üzerine kuruludur. Bununla birlikte, bu inşacı rol önceden verilmiş bir dilsel anlam sisteminden bağımsız değildir. Ancak, var olan bir gerçeğin ve maddi güçlerin tanınması, ana akım materyalist yaklaşımlarla derin ontolojik ayrımı değiştirmemektedir. Post-yapısalcı göreliliğe ve idealizme kıyasla farklı duruşuna rağmen, konstrüktivizmin önemi ana akım materyalist teorilere yönelik eleştirel konum üzerine inşa edilmiştir.

Ontolojik ayrışmanın bir başka noktası, çoğunlukla aktörler tarafından genellikle rasyonel seçim varsayımı yoluyla ifade edilen bireyci ontolojidir. Rasyonalizm, bireyci bir eylem teorisi olarak, aktörlerin mevcut seçenekler arasında kendi çıkarlarını tutarlı bir tercih sıralaması doğrultusunda azami fayda gözeterek seçim yaptıkları kabulüne dayanır. Bu nedenle, aktörlerin tercihleri (arzuları) ve başarı beklentisi belirlendiği sürece, davranış hakkında çıkarımlar yapmak mümkündür. Ayrıca, genellikle varsayıldığı üzere, materyalist ontoloji ile birleştiğinde rasyonalistlerin tercihlerinin içeriğini belirlemek daha da kolaylaşır. Çıkarların içeriğinin tipik olarak güç veya servet gibi maddi belirleyiciler odaklı olduğu varsayılır ve normlar ve sosyal yapılar araç-amaç hesaplamaları içinde en iyi ihtimalle kısıtlayıcı bir role sahip olabilir.

Rasyonalist çerçevede, devletlerin kimlik ve çıkarlarının yanı sıra, bunları tanımlayan uluslararası anarşinin doğası da verili kabul edildiğinden, amillerdeki ve yapıdaki değişim olanağı sınırlanır. Sadece sabit çıkar ve kimlik çerçevesinde devletlerin davranışlarındaki değişikliklerle ilgilenir. Diğer bir deyişle, rasyonalist çerçeve içinde, devlet çıkarının içeriği ve anlamı zaman ve mekân odaklı nadiren değişime uğrar. Ancak önceden belirlenmiş çıkarlara ulaşma yolunda stratejik kararlar ve davranışsal tepkiler değişiklik gösterebilir. Konstrüktivistler ise materyalist ontolojiye yaklaşımlarına benzer bir şekilde; kimlikleri, fikirleri ve normları aktörlerin karar alma süreçlerinin açıklayıcı çerçevesine entegre eder. Bu bağlamda, bağımsız mekanizmaların

ampirik doğrulamalarına odaklanan pozitivist pratiğin yerine anlam yorumlama ve deęişen pratiğin etkisini kavrama çabasına girişilmektedir.

Ancak konstrüktivizmin ontolojik olarak sunduęu orta yolun bireyselci ontolojiden çok da uzak olmadığı yönünde eleştiriler de araştırmının odak noktalarından biri konumundadır. Rasyonel seçim yoluyla karar vermeye dayanan bireyci çerçeveye ontolojik bir meydan okuma yaratma konusundaki yetersizlięi, kısmen konstrüktivistlerin devlete yönelik ontolojik baęlılıklarından kaynaklanmaktadır. Konstrüktivizmin ontolojik temellere dayandırmaya çalıştığı tartışmalarına rağmen, devlet çoğunlukla verili olarak kabul edilmiştir. Bu genellikle amilin varlığını kendi parçalarından azade bir duruma indirgeyerek daha az karmaşık bir amil-yapı ilişkisi yaratma yönündeki epistemolojik ihtiyaçtan kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım daha az materyalist bir rasyonalite yaratmada oldukça başarılı olsa da, ana akım kuramda gömülü olan bireyci ontoloji problemini pekiştirmektedir.

Epistemolojik olarak ise konstrüktivizmin sunduęu orta yol, post-yapısalcılıktan çok ana akım teorilere yakın olarak konumlandırılır. Konstrüktivizm, özgürleştirmeden çok açıklama amacı ile post-yapısalcılardan ayrılır. Bununla birlikte bu konum sosyal bir ontoloji ve pozitivist nedensellik vurgusunun aynı zamanda kullanılmasından kaynaklı bir tutarlılık sorununu gündeme getirmektedir. Tutarsızlık konusu, konstrüktivist argümanların meta-teorik düzeyle sınırlı olduğu yönünde eleştirilere neden oldu, ancak konstrüktivizm bu metodolojik problemi, pozitivist uygulamalara baęlı kalmasına yardımcı olan ekonomideki 'açıklanmış tercihler' teorisine benzer bir yaklaşımın entegrasyonu ile çözmeye çalışmaktadır. Bununla birlikte konstrüktivist teori bireylerin niyetlerine vurgu yapan daha geleneksel yaklaşımın yanı sıra, sosyal bir bağlamda ifade edilen anlam nesillerinin, normların ve kuralların ifadesi olarak dilin rolünün altını çizer. Bu çerçevede daha önce vurgulanan ontolojik işleve ek olarak 'dilsel dönüşüm', özne ve nesne arasında bir köprü kurma odağındaki epistemolojik bir hedefe de işaret eder. Başka bir deyişle, 'dilsel

dönüşüm' sadece anlamın inşası için ontolojik çerçeveyi oluşturmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda aktörler arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesinin ve önceden inşa edilmiş anlamın öznel yorumunun mümkün olduğu epistemolojik zemini de oluşturur. Konstrüktivizm söylemsel pratiklerden bağımsız olarak dış gerçekliğin varlığına rıza gösterirken, onların dilden bağımsız gözlemlerine meydan okumaktadır. Özetlemek gerekirse, konstrüktivist epistemolojinin dayandığı temel, gözlemlenebilir ham verilere dayanan bir saf deneycilik değildir. Konstrüktivizmin ontolojik ve epistemolojik konumu, her şeyden önce 'yorumlama' sürecinin hem sorgulanan aktörler hem de araştırmacının kendisi açısından kabul edilmesini gerektirir.

Araştırmanın metodolojisi ise temel olarak konstrüktivist temellerin vaka çalışmasına nasıl uygulanacağı sorusuyla ilgilenmektedir. Metodolojik çerçeve sadece vaka odaklı araştırma sorusuna kılavuzluk etmekle kalmayıp, konstrüktivist teorinin değişim vurgusuna analitik temel oluşturmayı ve konstrüktivizmin meta-teorik ve sistemik odağını ampirik bir araştırmaya taşımayı hedeflemektedir. Konstrüktivist yaklaşımın temel varsayımlarından sapmadan vurguda böyle bir değişiklik yaratmanın ilk adımı, teorik çerçeve içinde bir amil-yapı tartışması sunmayı gerektirir. Bu anlamda metodolojik çerçeve, soyut antropomorfik niteliklere sahip ve uluslararası politikanın tek temsilcisi olmaktan çok, devletin kendi içinde bir yapı olarak kavramsallaştırılmasını haklı çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu bağlamda öncelikli hedef devlet olgusunun verili kabul edilen doğallığından ayırmayı ve devlet içi amilleri ön plana çıkarabilmek amacıyla devleti bir yapı olarak kabul edip iç bileşenlerine ayırmayı meşrulaştırma hedefini gütmektedir. Devletin kendi içinde bir yapı olarak ele alınması ve yerel aktörlere ve süreçlere yapılan vurgu ile birlikte, sunulan metodolojik çerçeve devletlerin kimlik inşası süreçlerinin yerel dinamiklerinin incelenmesine de olanak tanır. Ancak, sosyal ontolojiye yönelik konstrüktivist vurgu ve kimlik inşası sürecindeki uluslararası sosyalleşmenin önemi de korunmaktadır. Bu nedenle araştırmanın metodolojisinde sunulan amil-yapı

tartışması aslında ‘analiz düzeyi’ sorunsalının bilinçli bir şekilde görmezden gelinmesini meşrulaştırmak için sürdürülmüştür.

Konstrüktivizmin uluslararası aktörlerin karşılıklı algılarına ve kimliklerinin inşasında sosyal etkileşime yaptığı vurgu, metodolojik çerçevede ‘tarihsel anlatının’ bu ilişkileri anlamlandırabilme yolu olarak kullanılmasını sağlamıştır. Karşılıklı ilişkilerin tarihi, aktörlerin müşterek algılarının ve dolayısıyla kimlik inşasının oluşumu süreciyle ilgili izlenimler sunabilir. Bu bakımdan karşılıklı ilişkinin niteliği; düşmanlık, tahakküm ilişkileri ve belirli olayların ve olası travmaların etkisi, analizin bir diğer odağını oluşturmaktadır.

Bu nedenle araştırmmanın ana metodolojik çerçevesi, devlet kimliğinin inşasının yerel ve uluslararası dinamiklerinin analitik sentezine dayanmaktadır. Kimlik inşasının uluslararası dinamikleri tarihsel anlatının uluslararası etkileşimi yansıtan bir gözlemsel bir dinamik olarak ele alınması ile oluşturulurken, yerel süreçlerin analizi yerel aktörlerin artık bir yapı olarak kabul edilen devlet içi etkileşimleri doğrultusunda işlenmektedir.

Tarihsel anlatının doğal odağı Rusya ve Gürcistan arasındaki ikili ilişkiler üzerindeyken, Güney Osetya ve Abhazya ile ilgili anlatılar çalışmaya dahil edildi. Bunun temel nedeni, büyük güç politikalarına dayanan analizler tarafından genellikle göz ardı edilmesine rağmen, Gürcistan ve Rusya’nın etkileşimlerinin doğası savaşa yol açan gelişmeleri etkilediği kabulüdür. Metodolojik olarak tarihsel anlatının başlangıç noktası olarak Demokratik Gürcistan Cumhuriyeti(DGC) alınmıştır. Bunun nedeni, 1918’den Kızıl Ordu tarafından 1921’de işgaline kadar sadece üç yıl varlığını devam ettirebilmiş olmasına ve Rusya Gürcistan ilişkileri DGC`den daha öncesine dayanmasına rağmen, Demokratik Gürcistan Cumhuriyeti hafızasının özellikle Gürcistan milli kimliği ve Gürcistan’ın Rusya ile ilişkileri anlatısı üzerine ayrıcalıklı konumundan kaynaklanmaktadır.

Araştırmanın kapsamı ve odağı dahilinde, DGC deneyimi, Gürcistan'ın batı kimliğine bağlılığı ve Gürcistan milliyetçi anlatısında Rusya'nın öteki imgesi olarak ön plana çıkması açısından çok önemlidir. DGC'nin ilk günden itibaren vurgulanan Avrupa kimliğine bağlılığı, 1991'den sonra art arda gelen Gürcistan hükümetleri tarafından kesintisiz olarak takip edildi. Gürcistan'ın tarihi anlatısı büyük ölçüde onun Yunanlılar, Romalılar, Bizanslılar, Moğollar, Türkler ve Perslerle olan çatışmalarıyla doluydu. Bunların arasında Osmanlı ve Pers imparatorluklarına karşı mücadeleler, Ortodoks Hristiyan kimliğinin altını çizdi ve güçlü Hristiyan müttefiklerle ittifak arayışına yol açtı. Bu çerçevede Gürcistan açısından Rusya'nın Güney Kafkasya'daki tarihsel varlığı çerçevesinde bir takdir odağı oluşturdu. Ancak 1921'deki Kızıl Ordu işgali, Gürcistan'ın Müslüman güçlere yönelik tutumunu şekillendiren tarihsel hafızaya benzer şekilde Rusya'ya yönelik yabancılaşmaya neden oldu. Milliyetçi anlatının Rusya'ya karşıt bir şekilde dönüşümü ve demokrasinin ön plana çıkmasıyla Avrupa kimliğinin gelişmesi açısından, DGC'nin mirası önemli bir yere sahiptir.

Sovyet dönemi ise fikirsel etiketlenmenin özünü belirleyip düzenleyerek topluluklar arasındaki sosyal ilişkilerin doğasını yapılandırdı. Sovyetler Birliği'nin kurumsal mirası, etnik kimliklerin etno-federalizm yoluyla kristalleşmesinden ve kurumsallaşmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Sovyetler Birliği'nin çöküşü, ilişkilerin doğasında olduğu kadar benlik ve ötekinin kimliklerinin inşası ve tanımlanmasındaki dönüşümlere de tanıklık eden bir geçiş dönemini ifade etti. Geçiş dönemi, Gürcistan'ın Güney Osetya ve Abhazya bölgeleri ile ilişkileri açısından ve dolayısıyla çatışmanın tarihsel anlatımı için önem arz etmektedir. Gürcistan, bağımsızlık mücadelesini bir Rus imparatorluk yönetiminden kurtulma ve bir dekolonizasyon süreci olarak tanımlarken ve bu mücadelede Güney Osetya ve Abhazya'nın tam desteğini beklerken, bu bölgeler daha çok Sovyet döneminde sahip oldukları kültürel hakların ve özerkliğin kaybedilmesi tehdidiyle ilgileniyorlardı ve Sovyet devletini koruma yönünde muhafazakâr bir tavır aldılar. Ayrıca Gürcistan'ın ilk yıllarındaki üniter devlet arzusu üzerinden yoğun milliyetçi referansları, bu

bölgelerin özerkliklerini kaybetme yönündeki endişelerini derinleştirdi. Dolayısıyla bağımsızlığın ilk yılları, 1990-93 yılları arasında Abhazya ve Güney Osetya'nın ayrılıkçı bölgelerinde yaklaşık 17.500 kişinin ölümüne ve 200.000'den fazla dahili mülteciye neden olan iki şiddetli çatışmaya tanık oldu. Yeltsin, çatışmaların ilk aşamalarında çatışmaya karşı tarafsız bir tavır alırken, sonraları ordunun, milliyetçilerin ve muhafazakâr komünistlerin artan etkisine bir taviz olarak Abhazya ve Güney Osetya yanında daha aktif bir rol üstlendi. Çatışmanın ardından Rusya, bölgede barışı koruma rolünü üstlenerek bölgedeki varlığını ve kontrolünü sürdürdü. Rusya'nın bölgelere yönelik politikaları, Tiflis'in bölgenin Rusya tarafından fiilen ilhak edilmesi ihtimalinden şüphelenmesine neden oldu. 2008 yılına gelindiğinde Rusya, Güney Osetya'da ikamet eden nüfusun çok büyük bir çoğunluğuna Rus vatandaşlığı vermişti ve Güney Osetya'nın bütçe gelirinin üçte ikisini Moskova'nın doğrudan katkısı oluşturmaktaydı. Aslında 2008'den önce Rusya, Güney Osetlileri Rus vatandaşı olarak gördüğünü ve Gürcistan'ın saldırısı durumunda müdahale edeceğini açıkça belirtmişti.

Düşünsel yönler üzerindeki uluslararası etkileşimin bir projeksiyonu olarak tarihsel anlatı, yerel dinamiklerle tamamlanmalıdır. Bu çerçevede, analizin amacı, liderlerin düşünsel söylemleri inşa etme ve kullanma yolları ve içyapısal sınırlamalar dahilinde onlardan nasıl etkilendiklerini inceleyebilmektir.

Rusya açısından, Soğuk Savaş'ın sonu ve Gorbaçov'un 'Yeni Düşüncesi' Rusya'nın düşünsel çerçevesi ve kimlik tartışmaları açısından kritik bir dönemece oluşturdu. Bu süreç benliğin tanımı ve Batı ile ilişkiler açısından bir geçişi simgeliyordu. Bununla birlikte, Rusya'nın fikirsel tartışması, Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesine neden olan dönüşümle sınırlı değildir. Literatürde farklı zaman dilimleri dönüşüm noktaları olarak ele alınarak, Rusya'nın kimliksel tartışmaları ve bu noktada değişen dış politika tavırları üzerine farklı bakış açıları sunulmaktadır. Rus dış politikasındaki değişimler, çoğunlukla

Rus kimliğinin tartışmalı ideolojik geleneklerinin üstünlüğüne işaret etmektedir.

Ulusun kimliğine ilişkin farklı ideolojik gelenekler ve çeşitli imgeler, ötekinin tanınmasını ve yerel koşulları ele almada üstünlüğü arayan ve dış dünyanın doğasını yorumlayan farklı koalisyonlar tarafından temsil edilir ve desteklenir. Bu bağlamda, kimlik koalisyonlarının temel amacı, servetin veya gücün maksimize edilmesini amaçlayan çıkar koalisyonlarının aksine, sosyal tanınma sağlamaktır. Ancak, düşünsel dinamiklerin ortaya çıkışı ve yükselişi, yerel kurumsal yapı ve sınırlamalardan muaf değildir.

Gorbaçov, kurumsal yapıyı değiştirdi ve gerekliliği gördüğü genel kalkınma hedefi doğrultusunda alternatif seçim koalisyonlarını destekledi; sivil savunma entelektüelleri, reformist ideologlar ve liberal entelektüeller, askeri-sanayi kompleksinin, eski tarz ideologların ve otarşik endüstriyel çıkarların yerini aldı. Yeni düşüncenin ideolojik temelleri Kruşçev ve Brejnev dönemi Sovyet akademik dönemine kadar götürülebilir. Gorbaçov'un ideolojik değişim arayışı yapısal koşullar içinde, çoğunlukla güç dengesini reformist koalisyon lehine çevirmek yoluyla gerçekleşti. Gorbaçov, kurumsal gerekçelerle, geleneksel anlayışın somut bir örneği olarak duran ordunun etkisini azalttı ve güvenlik işlerinin çoğunu Dışişleri Bakanlığı'na ve reformist sivil elitlere yönlendirdi.

Kurumsal yapıya yansıyan ideolojik kamplar arasındaki rekabet örüntüsü sonraki dönemlerde de devam etti. Gorbaçov, iktidarın pekiştirilmesinde görece başarılı olmuş ve reformların gerçekleştirilmesini sağlayan yapısal dönüşümler gerçekleştirmiş olsa da, Yeltsin dönemi batılılar ve devletçiler arasındaki daimi bir mücadele dönemi oldu. Batılılaşma istekliliğinin Yeltsin döneminde de varlığını sürdürmesine rağmen, Yeltsin dönemi aynı zamanda devletçi mentaliteye geçiş dönemi olarak da kabul edilebilir. Yeltsin'in dış politikası, Batılılaşma özelemleri açısından Gorbaçov döneminin bir devamını temsil ediyordu. Bununla birlikte Yeltsin dönemi, yapısal koşulların ve

sınırlamaların dönüşümü üzerinden sürekli bir üstünlük mücadelesine sahne olmuştur. Merkezi otoritenin kurulamaması, özellikle Yeltsin döneminin sonraki aşamalarında devletçi politikalara taviz verilmesine neden olurken, ekonomik reformların başarısızlığı, sonraki dönemde devletçi politikaların tamamen geri dönmesine neden oldu. Merkezi kontrolün kurulamaması, fikirsel temellerin politika seçimleri üzerine tam olarak yansıtılmasını engelledi ve bu da bir tutarsızlık görüntüsü yarattı. Yeltsin döneminin sonraki yıllarında artan milliyetçi ton, Putin dönemi Rusya dış politikasının Yeltsin döneminin bir devamı olarak görülmesine neden olmuş olsa da, aslında bu dönem ideolojik kamplar arasında devletçi koalisyonun artan gücünün etkisinden kaynaklı olarak Batı yanlısı koalisyonun etkili olamadığı bir geçiş dönemi olarak görülmelidir. Yeltsin'in batılılaşma eğilimine rağmen, iktidarın pekiştirilmemesi ve devlet yapısı içindeki devletçi koalisyonun artan etkisi, dış politika tercihlerinin seyrini değiştirdi. 1990'ların başındaki ekonomik reformların başarısızlığı, yüksek düzeyde yolsuzluk ve Batı desteğinin gerçekleşmemiş vaatleri hayal kırıklığı yarattı ve halkın desteğini kademeli olarak kısıtladı. Putin ise, seçilmesinin ardından bölgesel hükümetlerin özerkliğini kısıtlayarak yasama organının etkisini sınırlayarak gücünü kademeli olarak sağlamlaştırmayı başardı. Yerel dengeler açısından Putin, uluslararası ilişkileri güç ve etki için birkaç güçlü ülke arasında bir çekişme alanı olarak gören güvenlik camiasının desteğini ve yardımını aldı. Putin daha önceki dönemlerden farklı olarak bir yandan siyasi elitlerin ve halkın desteğini aynı anda sağlamayı başarmışken, diğer yandan da, iç yönetim yapısını da kendisine daha az kısıtlama içinde hareket etmesine ve kişisel inançlarına uygun politikalar izlemesine olanak tanıyacak şekilde değiştirmeyi başardı. Gorbaçov ve Yeltsin dönemine benzer şekilde, Putin'in dış politikasını şekillendiren diğer imajı da Batı ve özellikle ABD odağında şekillendi.

Yeni oluşan ideolojik ortamda gelişen iki fikri kavram (çok kutupluluk ve egemen demokrasi) Rusya'nın bölgeye ve Batıya yönelik tutumunun göstergesi haline gelmiştir. Rusya, çok kutupluluğu uluslararası siyasette saygın bir role sahip olmanın bir ön şartı olarak gördü ve bu amaçla Çin,

Hindistan ve Brezilya gibi güçlü ülkeler arasında işbirliği arayışına girdi ve çok taraflı örgütleri teşvik etti. Çok kutupluluk vurgusu, özellikle Rusya'nın uluslararası kuruluşlara yönelik yaklaşımını belirlemiştir. Özellikle NATO belirli ülkelerin politikalarının uzantısı olarak görülürken, Rusya alternatif olarak Birleşmiş Milletler 'in çok taraflı yapısını alternatif mekanizmalar olarak sunmuştur. Bu anlamda Rusya'nın NATO'ya yönelik çok kutupluluk çerçevesinde gelişen tutumu, Gürcistan'ın NATO üyeliğine yönelik bakış açısını özetlemektedir. Rusya'nın NATO'nun genişlemesine yönelik karşıt tutumu, NATO'nun oluşturduğu askeri tehdit olasılığından çok, istediği büyük güç imajından kaynaklanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, NATO'nun genişlemesine yönelik muhalefet, Rusya'nın ABD hegemonyası altındaki tek kutuplu dünya düzenine muhalefetinin daha geniş bir çerçevesinin bir parçası olarak değerlendirilmelidir. Batı ile ilişkilerin doğasının tanımlanmasında ortaya çıkan bir diğer kavram da 'egemen demokrasi'dir. Kavram, yerel dinamikler doğrultusunda belirlenmiş bir siyasi gelişme yolunu savunma arzusu olarak görülmüştür. Ayrıca kavram demokrasi gibi liberal ve Batı kökenli değerlerin yerel dinamikler çerçevesinde özümsemesi gerektiğini savunur. Rusya'nın muhalefetinin temel odağı, ABD ve AB'yi diğer tüm uygarlıklara prototip olarak gören tek tip, birleşik demokrasi standardının dayatılmasıydı. 2005 yılında Kırgızistan'daki Lale Devrimi ile başlayan bu düşünce çerçevesine uygun olarak Rusya, Bağımsız Devletler Topluluğu genelinde renkli devrimlere yönelik Batı desteğini, Rusya'yı Batı yanlısı rejimlerle kuşatma ve nihayetinde Rusya'nın içinde de rejim değişikliğini kışkırtma girişimi olarak algıladı.

Gürcistan'ın NATO üyesi olma özlemleri ve demokratikleşme ve batılılaşma vurgusu düşünüldüğünde, Gürcistan Rusya'nın küresel siyasette kendi konumunu belirlemesi ile ilgili kurulan fikirsel tartışmaların odak noktası haline geldi. Ancak bu pozisyon, büyük güç siyasetinin doğal bir devamı olmaktan ziyade, Rusya'nın fikirsel bir çerçeve içindeki iç tartışmaları aracılığıyla şekillendi. Rusya'nın tek kutuplu dünya düzenine muhalefeti ve eski Sovyet alanında batılılaşma ve demokratikleşmeye tepki, sırasıyla yapısal güç

siyasetine ve jeopolitiğe vurgu duygusu yaratsa da; aslında, Batı ile etkileşim üzerinden şekillenen Rusya'nın kimliğiyle ilgili iç tartışmaların bir sonucudur.

Rus kimliği ve dış politikasının analizi, içyapısal kısıtlamalara bağlı olarak Gorbaçov'dan Putin'e radikal farklılıklar gösteren bir değişim analizi iken, Gürcü milli kimliği bunun yerine bir süreklilik eğilimi ortaya koymaktadır. Gürcistan'ın Batı ile ilişkileri, Rusya ile Gürcistan arasındaki çatışmaya ilişkin tartışmaların ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır. Gül Devrimi ve Gürcistan'ın NATO üyeliği istekleri, çatışmaya yol açan kritik mihenk taşları oluşturdu. Bununla birlikte, Gürcistan'ın Batı ile olan bağlılık ilişkileri genellikle Rusya'ya karşı pragmatik güvenlik hesaplamaları üzerinden okunmaktadır. Güvenlik hesaplamaları Gürcistan'ın Batıyla ilişkilerinin önemli bir parçası olsa da, bağlılık Rusya'yı güvenlik kaygılarının dışında da öteleyen daha geniş bir fikirsel çerçevede analiz edilmelidir.

Avrupa'nın bir parçası olmanın ayrıcalıklı vurgusu her zaman yaygın söylemin bir parçası olsa da, ilişkilerin doğası ve algısı Gürcistan'ın farklı dönemlerinde farklı anlamlar kazanmıştır. Gamsakhurdia dönemi Rus karşıtı söylemin popüler batılılaşma özelemleriyle birleştirildiği bir dönem oldu. Gamsakhurdia'nın fikirsel çerçevesi, Batı'ya yönelik her türlü özlemi bastıran Rus karşıtı duyguların hâkimiyetindeydi. Gamsakhurdia döneminin radikal idealizminin aksine, Shevardnadze'nin politikaları, bölgesel bir çıkar dengesi üzerinden şekillenen geleneksel pragmatizmi ifade ediyordu. Bu çerçevede İran, Çin, Orta Asya ve Rusya ile iyi ilişkiler kurmaya çalıştı ve Gürcistan'ın güvenlik meselelerinde Batı'ya bağımlılığını sona erdirmeye çalıştı. Bununla birlikte, 1990'ların ikinci yarısı, Gürcistan'ı 1993'te BDT'ye dahil olmasına rağmen Rusya'nın ayrılıkçı bölgelere verdiği destek sorununu çözememesinin ardından dış politika yöneliminde Batı yanlısı bir değişime tanık oldu. Bu çerçevede NATO ve Avrupa Birliği üyelikleri konusunda önemli adımlar atıldı. Bununla birlikte, Shevardnadze dönemi harap olmuş altyapı, etnik bölünmüşlük, kötü ekonomik performans ve her şeyden önce yolsuzlukla anılan bir dönem oldu. Bu konular, Saakaşvili'yi iktidara getiren

Gül Devrimi'nin ana argümanları haline geldi. Sonraki yıllarda ekonomik serbestleşme, yolsuzlukla mücadele ve kurumsal yapılanmaya odaklanan hızlı reformlara tanık olunmuştur. Toprak bütünlüğünün geri kazanımı, ekonomik reformlarla birlikte Saakaşvili'nin en önemli önceliğiydi. Aslında Saakaşvili, Gürcistan'ın ekonomik kalkınmasının nihayetinde ayrılıkçı bölgeleri de cezbedeceğini iddia ederek liberalizme olan bağlılığını çatışmanın çözümüne yansıttı.

Gürcistan'ın Gamsakhurdia'dan Saakashvili'ye kadar Avrupalı kimliğine olan bağlılığının genel bir incelemesi, liderlerin karakterlerine göre farklılık göstermekle birlikte, Avrupalılık temelindeki düşünsel dinamiklerin dayanıklılığını ortaya koymuştur. Bu çerçevede, Rusya ve Gürcistan'ın fikirselleştirilmesinin karşılaştırmalı analizi, sürekli çelişen pozisyonları ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Bu düşünsel çerçeve içinde, Rusya'nın jeopolitik kuşatılmasıyla ilgili endişelerinin doğruluğuna ve çok kutuplu dünya düzenine vurgu yapılmasına rağmen; değişen dış politika zihniyeti, değişen güç dengesinin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmaktan çok belirli bir söylemin yerel gelişiminden ve baskınlığından kaynaklanan düşünsel bir konumu yansıtıyordu. Bu noktada araştırma, Rusya'nın saldırgan dış politika tutumuna neden olan şeyin güç dengesi yapısı içindeki değişen küresel konumlanma olmadığını savunarak, ana akım literatürde bulunan nedensel yönü pratik olarak tersine çevirmektedir. Aslında bu tür politikalar, dünya düzeninde yeni bir konum elde etmenin bir yolu olarak izlenmişti ve bu yeni konuma olan ihtiyaç, esas olarak Batı'ya atıfla genelde yerel olarak oluşturulan fikirselleştirilmelerle tanımlanan bir ihtiyaçtan doğmaktaydı. Bu anlamda 2008 Rusya Gürcistan Savaşı, Rusya açısından bu kimliğin ve konumlandırmanın bir savunması olarak yorumlanmalıdır.

Öte yandan Gürcistan'ın Güney Osetya'ya Rusya'nın tepkisinin kesin olmasına rağmen, Güney Osetya'ya Batı desteği beklentisi olmadan

saldırması karar alma süreçlerinde rasyonel seçim varsayımlarının sorgulanmasına yol açmalıdır. Aksine, Güney Osetya'ya saldırarak savaşı başlatma kararı ancak tarihsel anlatı çerçevesinde oluşmuş bir ulusal birliğe bağlılık ve Rusya'dan gelen sürekli tehdit algısıyla anlaşılabilir.

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