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# Framing the 2008 war in Georgia in Resonance, Izvestia, and the New York Times

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FRAMING THE 2008 WAR IN GEORGIA  
IN *RESONANCE*, *IZVESTIA*, AND *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Ekaterine Basilaia

August 2009

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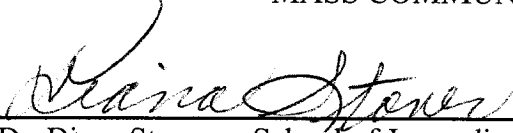
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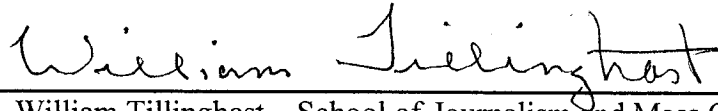
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Ekaterine Basilaia

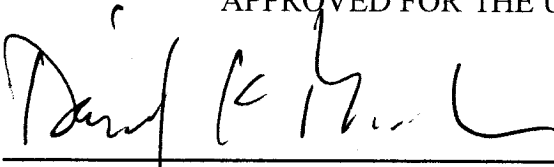
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## ABSTRACT

### FRAMING THE 2008 WAR IN GEORGIA IN *RESONANCE*, *IZVESTIA*, AND *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

by Ekaterine Basilaia

This thesis provides a comparative analysis of how three newspapers—*Resonance* in Georgia, *Izvestia* in Russia, and *The New York Times* in the United States—framed the war in Georgia in August of 2008. The study was conducted in three languages. The set of war frames was dominant in all three newspapers, particularly the military frame with its focus on combat, troops, and weaponry. The four other dominant sets of frames were the political, diplomatic, human interest, and causality frames. Overall, for each of the five sets of frames, the coverage in *The New York Times* contained a significantly higher number of the frames, and *Izvestia*'s coverage had the lowest number of frames.

An important finding was that, although the publications used the same frames, they emphasized different aspects. In the prognostic frame, which is the part of the causality set of frames, *Resonance* was concerned about the political situation in Georgia, Georgian-Russian relationships, and regional issues. In *Izvestia* and *The New York Times*, the focus was on the political consequences of the war. The study provided evidence that the national and foreign policy interests of the countries as well as the journalistic norms and the reporting styles of the three newspapers contributed to the differences in the way the three newspapers framed the conflict between Georgia and Russia.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my brother, George, who I know is always with me in spirit.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the very first stage of this thesis to the final draft, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to my parents, who offered me unconditional love and encouraged me during the times when it seemed hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In a world of continuously changing political, economic, and social environments, the audience depends heavily on information in the news media. The mass media present a variety of frames to make sense of world affairs. The reporting of conflict is a challenge for news organizations, and journalists are constantly in search of truth, objectivity, accuracy, and balance. Because of its proximity to newsworthy events, a news organization located in the heart of conflict zones is an important player in informing the public and shaping its understanding on particular issues. This study analyzed how Georgian, Russian, and American media framed the 2008 war in Georgia, a former state of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

To frame is to give a certain shape to a large amount of information that will allow for concise and efficient writing and, at the same time, emphasize particular aspects of information. Framing is unavoidable for a journalist. A journalist puts together the information that he or she thinks needs to be presented to the public and news frames become embedded in the story. Framing theory has its roots in cognitive psychology and has been an important concept used to explain important phenomena in media, political communication, international relations, and psychology. As Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) wrote: "Events do not speak for themselves, they must be woven into some larger story line or frame" (p. 117).

In the early morning of August 8, 2008, the Georgian military launched an attack against separatist military targets in Georgia's breakaway de facto Republic of

South Ossetia. The Georgian administration said it had been forced to retaliate after coming under continued and sustained attacks from the South Ossetian side.

Consequently, fierce fighting erupted around the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali.

In response, Russia deployed troops to South Ossetia to assist its peacekeepers who were stationed in the conflict zone under a United Nations mandate to monitor the region, together with Georgian peacekeepers. It bombed Tskhinvali to force Georgian troops out of the area. Russian authorities had a counter-argument to justify their presence in South Ossetia. Russia had accused Georgia of deliberately ramping up its own military presence in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and assuming a hard-line posture against those enclaves.

On August 9, 2008, Russian jets started bombing Georgian military targets. The Georgian leadership described the air strikes as a full-scale military invasion. Subsequently, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili stated that Russia was at war with his country. At the same time, he called on Georgian troops to withdraw from the conflict zone of South Ossetia and announced the ceasefire. By August 10, 2008, the Russian army had advanced to take complete control South Ossetia's capital of Tskhinvali. On August 11 and 12, Russian tanks and troops advanced deeper into the country and started moving towards the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi. On behalf of the European Union (EU), French President Nicolas Sarkozy initiated diplomatic negotiations to help Georgia and Russia resolve the crisis. Sarkozy put forth a peace agreement that both sides signed on August 15. On August 17, 2008, Russia officially pledged to start withdrawing forces from Georgian territory in keeping with the

agreement. However, the withdrawal did not start until August 22. By August 24, Russian troops left part of the Georgian territories, but they remained in the city of Poti—Georgia’s main port—as well as in the breakaway de facto republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. During Russia’s operation for peace enforcement that lasted for five days, 15 Georgian cities were bombed. The bombing killed 238 people, including Georgian soldiers, and some 192,000 civilians were displaced.

#### Purpose of the Study

This study examined how the Georgian, Russian, and American media framed the war in Georgia, and more precisely the war among Georgia, Georgia’s de facto secessionist republic of South Ossetia, and Russia. The publications selected were *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. The study covered the period from the start of the war on August 8, 2008 until the withdrawal of the Russian military from Georgian territories on October 8, 2008.

Frames may guide how people understand the world and thus form judgments (Brewer, Graf, & Willnat, 2003). The theoretical foundation of framing was applied to this study of frames in war coverage. To determine the predominant frames, a framing analysis was conducted of the news articles about the war that were found in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. One reason for selecting these specific news organizations was to analyze what frames were predominantly shown by the national news publications in the three countries. The unit of analysis was the paragraph of the story. In total, a sample of 564 articles containing 6,687 paragraphs related to the war in Georgia was analyzed. Previous research has shown that frames come into sharp focus

when media coverage is compared across countries, particularly since the national and foreign policy interests of the countries are different.

A framing study of national and international conflicts is important for determining the way media present the news that, in turn, may affect how the public worldwide perceives the news. The manner in which regional news organizations, *Resonance* and *Izvestia*, covered the 2008 war in Georgia might have had an impact on public opinion locally and internationally. *The New York Times*' coverage is an important example of how the conflict was presented to the American public. Although the examination of particular journalistic norms throughout the coverage was not the focus of this thesis, this study provided insight into the differences between Western journalism values and those employed by newspapers in post-Communist countries.

The study is important because almost all scholarly research on framing is based on research using only American media. A computerized literature search on the coverage by news media in post-Soviet republics found no scholarly research on the Georgian media. In addition, there were only a few studies on the coverage in *Izvestia*.

The organization of this thesis is as follows: Chapter II provides a review of the relevant literature pertaining to framing theory, including a review of the context for framing of recent wars in the media. Chapter II also includes a theoretical framework and research questions. Chapter III details the method used for this framing study. Chapter IV presents the results of this study, including both a descriptive and a statistical analysis. Finally, Chapter V provides a discussion of the study's conclusion and its contributions to the existing literature.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the relevant theoretical literature on framing. The chapter will be divided into the following sections: framing as a theory, framing as a process, framing in wartime, and journalistic norms in the United States, Georgia, and Russia. The chapter will also provide the historical context of the war.

#### Framing and the Significance of Frames

Framing theory is the basis for this study. To examine the frames that were used by the Georgian, American, and Russian media in their coverage of the war in Georgia, framing theory is the most applicable among all other mass communication theories and approaches in the coverage of foreign conflicts and wars. As Entman (1991) wrote, frames exist at two levels: as mentally stored principles and as characteristics of news texts.

Framing is the way journalists select and emphasize certain events in the process of writing the story and conveying it to the audience. Framing refers to the way events and issues are organized and made sense of (Reese, 2007). Journalists unconsciously create frames while reporting the stories and transforming them into publicly discussable events (Tuchman, 1978). Frames construct particular meanings concerning issues through their emphasis, interpretation, and exclusion (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time and that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the world (Reese, 2003). Entman (1993) gave a more precise definition to framing, highlighting its main features:



To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 52)

News frames are constructed from and embodied in the keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasized in a news narrative (Entman, 1991). Texts can make bits of information more salient by repetition or by associating them with culturally familiar symbols (Entman, 1993). This issue will be discussed in subsequent sections more thoroughly.

Goffman (1974) was credited by Tuchman (1978) to be the originator of framing theory. Goffman argued that any event can be described in terms of a focus that includes a wide meaning or a narrow one. To frame means to organize one's individual experience. To better explain the issue, Goffman (1974) introduced the term "strip," which refers to any element of activity, including imaginary happenings seen from the perspective of those who are involved in them. He explained: "Observers actively project their frames of reference into the world immediately around them" (p. 39). Tuchman (1978) further noted that framing allows the information to be discernable, recognizable, and comprehensible for the audience, thus constructing the reality itself, rather than a picture of reality. Edelman (1993) noted that what people know about the nature of the social world depends on how they frame and interpret the cues they receive about the world: "Those cues would be very confusing if our minds did not give them particular meanings by focusing on a few and ignoring most and by placing those that receive attention into specific categories" (p. 231). At the same time, media discourse has been

seen by scholars as a struggle over meaning (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992).

Frames are principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation about what exists, happens and, above all, what matters (Gitlin, 1980). According to Gitlin (1980), a frame can be omitted and sometimes it happens unintentionally. News manages the symbolic arena of life by including certain messages and keeping others out (Gans, 1979).

The strength of a frame is that it can have a subtle but powerful effect on the audience “even to the point of helping to overthrow a president” (Tankard, 2003, p. 97). In an experiment on framing effects of television news, Iyengar (1991) noted that the way the media presents events to the audience is particularly significant as it can determine what choice viewers make when evaluating social and political events. Iyengar singled out two types of frames—episodic and thematic. The episodic news frame depicts public issues in terms of concrete instances. The thematic frame places public issues in a more general or abstract context and generally takes the form of a takeout or backgrounder. In essence, it is a report directed at general outcomes or conditions. Iyengar (1991) argued that, by giving preference to episodic framing, many issues have not received and will not receive any news coverage. De Vreese, Peter, and Semetko (2001) further expanded on these frames, defining them as issue-specific and generic frames. They argued that the issue-specific approach to the study of news frames renders the analysis difficult to generalize and compare. Instead, the authors suggested the study from the standpoint of generic news frames: “These frames are examples of a more generic conceptualization of

a kind of news frame that has the capacity to transcend issue, time, and space limits” (De Vreese, et al., p. 109).

Chong and Druckman (2007) wrote that the power of frames is their ability to define the terms of a particular debate without the audience realizing it is taking place. Frames in communication matter since they affect the attitudes and behaviors of their audiences. It is also important for political communication since politicians often adopt communication frames used by other politicians, the media, or citizens.

Tankard (2003) wrote that the concept of framing can offer an alternative to the scholarly studies of objectivity and bias, which were popular research topics in previous research. Distinguishing between bias and framing, Tankard noted that framing defines a situation or an issue and sets the terms of debate.

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) singled out five frames prevalent in studies of framing and framing effects: (1) attribution of responsibility, (2) conflict, (3) human interest, (4) economic consequences, and (5) morality. In a study on framing effects, Aday (2006) tested two types of frames: advocacy and objectivity. Aday defined advocacy frames as one-sided, solution oriented, and/or reflecting consensus. Advocacy frames most frequently appear in the coverage of foreign policy issues, social movements, and civic campaigns. Objectivity frames select two-sided narrative devices and/or a detached reportorial stance. They most frequently appear in conventional episodic news stories. In the coverage of air incidents in the Soviet Union and in the United States by the U.S. media, Entman (1991) identified a political frame dominating the U.S. media coverage of the two events. Given then-policy agendas and disputes,

Entman's framing analysis emphasized what was politically important in news texts: "The political frame comprises those message dimensions likeliest to promote a common, majority response to the news event as measured in public opinion polls" (p. 8). In a study of the American television coverage of the Iraq war, Aday, Cluverius, and Livingston (2005) identified the victory frame, which evolved and dominated the media agenda throughout the coverage.

Entman (1993) identified four locations for frames in the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. He noted: "The text contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments" (p. 52).

Entman further called framing research a fractured paradigm and proposed an interdisciplinary approach. Similar to Entman, Carragee and Roefs (2004) proposed a more complex approach to framing by combining studies on media frames with broader social and political issues.

Pan and Kosicki (1993) took a slightly different approach and proposed studying framing as a strategy of constructing and processing news discourse or as characteristics of discourse itself. To give framing research a more systematic character, Scheufele (1999) examined the ways frames are operationalized and the types of frames existing in framing research. Scheufele distinguished between studies on media frames and studies on audience frames. This more systematic approach to the framing model

will ultimately integrate scattered approaches into a coherent theory. The author suggested framing should be studied as a process model.

### Framing as a Process

Frames structure—that is, they impose a social world and a pattern comprised of a number of symbolic devices (Reese, 2003). They can also be seen as a means of community building (Pan & Kosicki, 2003). Norris, Kern, and Just (2003) further noted that, through frames, apparently scattered and diverse events are understood within regular patterns.

Scheufele (1999) developed the process model of media framing consisting of four stages: frame building, frame setting, individual-level effects of framing, and a link between individual frames and media frames. Entman (1991) gave a simpler explanation for news frames and their operation. News frames exist on two levels: as mentally stored principles for information processing and as characteristics of the news text. Entman also singled out the main features of framing—selection and salience. The context of media is not static, and it is constantly being influenced constantly by internal and external forces. Story selection is a decision and choice-making process.

Lippmann (1922) was the first to emphasize the process of selection as an important characteristic of media: “Every newspaper, when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what position they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, and what emphasis each shall have” (p. 40).

Journalists' work is concerned with time and space. Consequently, framing is characterized by time and space limits, which journalists have to contend with on every story (Fortunato, 2003). This affects the information-selection process. Only by selecting a few elements of reality, by considerably simplifying them, and by adapting them to those already known, is it possible to form pictures of reality and to communicate them to others (Noelle-Neumann, 1978). Therefore, most news frames are not only defined by what is included, but also by what is omitted (Entman, 1993).

The concept of selection is related to the concept of gatekeeping, introduced by White (1950). In his study, White wrote that the manner of selection of news is determined by the editor's highly subjective value-judgments; therefore communication of news is based on the gatekeeper's own set of experiences, attitudes, and expectations.

White's notion of gatekeeping was transformed into a wider, more integrated paradigm over the years, incorporating different social, political, and organizational constraints along with individuals' experiences (Gans, 1979; Fortunato 2005; McQuail, 2005; Tuchman, 1978). At least five factors may potentially influence how journalists select and frame a given issue: (1) social norms and values, (2) organizational pressures and constraints, (3) pressures of interest groups, (4) journalistic routines, and (5) ideological or political orientations of journalists (Scheufele, 2000). Organizational constraints play an important role in story production (Clausen, 2003; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). At the same time, journalists' individual values and judgments are deciding factors in making the news (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). Journalistic routines—when editors assign reporters to beats where news is framed by officials and

when editors and reporters adapt and reproduce the dominant ideological assumptions— influence news content (Gitlin, 1980). In addition to these factors, Clausen (2003) wrote that global and national contextual factors influence news selection and production processes.

In framing studies, scholars repeatedly refer to the media as being dependent on the dominant power institutions, both for problems and for information (Entman, 2004; Gamson, et al., 1992; Gitlin, 1980). Journalists have many reasons and motivations to use government officials as sources of stories, including the prestige their input adds to a story, their assumed objectivity and their availability in the limited time cycle (Noakes & Wilkins, 2002). Consequently, framing is not a one-way process; it is a complex process in which “influences travel in different directions” (Pan & Kosicki, 2003, p. 47).

After selection, salience/emphasis is the second main attribute of a frame. Salience means to make a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable (Entman, 1993). Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) wrote: “To hold the frame of a subject is to choose one particular meaning (or set of meanings) over the other” (p. 3). Media frames in texts are produced in the form of visual images, language, and sound (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). More specifically, different language devices can be used to produce frames within texts: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images, which are part of language and reasoning devices such as causal attributions, consequences, and appeals to principle (Entman, 1991; McLeod, Kosicki, & McLeod, 2002). Bantimaroudis and Ban (2003) extended the list of framing mechanisms by

including quotes, headlines, and subheads among others. However, they argued that the choice of language is the most important framing device.

By using these techniques, journalists can frame issues, which can result in enlarging or in shrinking the significance an event (Entman, 1993, 2004). Through redundancy that reinforces words and visual images in reference to some ideas but not others, frames can make some ideas more salient in the text and others entirely invisible (Entman, 1991). Van Gorp (2007) argued that these devices are held together under the heading of a central organizing theme of a news narrative.

Pan and Kosicki (1993) divided framing devices into four structural dimensions in news discourse: syntactical structure, script structure, thematic structure, and rhetorical structure. Syntactical structure of news discourse is characterized by the rules of source attributions, which includes such structural elements as headlines, leads, episodes, background, and closure. In other words, it refers to the patterns of how words or phrases are arranged into sentences.

By script structure, Pan and Kosicki (1993) refer to an established sequence of activities and components of an event that have been internalized as a structured mental representation of an event. The presence of a news script contains or appears to contain complete information about an event, including a beginning, a climax, and an end. A thematic structure is presented or implied and is evident in the form of journalists' observations of actions or quotations from a source, which is there to support the hypothesis in the text. A hypothesis is not present in the headline or lead sentence. Often journalists start the story with a vivid image or a concrete case and gradually lead the



audience to the point. Through rhetorical structures of news discourse, the authors describe the stylistic choices made by journalists in relation to the intended effects.

Pan and Kosicki (1993) also emphasized the role of lexical choices as powerful factors in presenting the frames within the text: “Reporters have a large repertoire of designators to choose from. The repertoire is the culture in which news discourse is constructed” (p. 62).

Frames perform four functions: define problems, give causal analysis, offer moral judgment, and provide a remedy or solution (Entman, 1993, 2004). The connection between framing and reasoning devices in a text and the actual frame takes place during the interpretation of the message by the journalists and the audience through a cognitive process (Van Gorp, 2007). The essence of the framing mechanism is that, at a cognitive level, the framing devices that are incorporated into a news message activate a schema that corresponds with the frame used by the journalist (Van Gorp, 2007).

#### Framing in Wartime

Media, whether local or international, play a central role in forming the images and perceptions of countries and can even influence the character of international relations. Media scholars have noted that press coverage during wartime abandons its adversarial, detached role. Scholarly research has shown that press coverage during wartime is typically uncritical and often patriotic when the media’s home government is involved (Aday, Cluverius, & Livingston, 2005). Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005) noted that there appears to be stability in the relationship between the media and the government/political elite during times of crisis, and that it is reflected in the news

coverage of international conflicts. This can lead to coverage that is sanitized and that presents a conflict in narrow frames, not allowing citizens to evaluate military actions from balanced information (Allen, Jasperson, O'Loughlin, & Sullivan, 1994; McQuail, 2005).

For decades, almost all the news regarding the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was reported by Western media within a Cold War frame (McNair, 1988). Official policy of the U.S. and Soviet governments helped establish a Cold War prism for viewing international events (Malinkina & McLeod, 2000). That type of coverage mainly delved into political aspects, the violation of civil liberties, and the abuse of human rights (Gans, 1979). Cultural and social issues within Communist-block countries were unknown and largely unexplored by Western journalists because of the Soviet governments' restrictions on news reporting (Remington, 1988). The end of the Cold War disrupted familiar networks of association in regard to world issues, loosening the coverage patterns of the American media regarding the already post-Soviet world and making them more independent of the elites in framing foreign countries (Entman, 2004). However, national news media are still likely to adhere to the U.S. government's position regarding international events (Dimotrova, Kaid, Williams, & Trammell, 2005). This is particularly applicable when the news media report on an international conflict when American interests are at stake. Comparing the news coverage of the conflict over the island of Tokdo between Japan and South Korea, Yoon and Gwangho (2002) wrote that the news media of both nations published stories supportive of each nation's government since both countries shared the views on the diplomatic conflict with their home governments.

Hence, the authors stated that the news frame of any antagonistic nation could shift as international political conditions change. In a framing study of U.S., British, and Dutch newspapers on global and local terrorist attacks, Ruigrok and Atteveldt (2007) found that, although proximity was a strong determinant, the framing of local and global terrorist attacks was more affected by the events of 9/11 than by local considerations of the media's home countries.

In research on the Serbian media coverage of the October, 2006 events regarding the Serbian adoption of a constitution that claimed Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia, Erjavec and Volčič (2007) identified a dominant Serbian nationalism frame. In particular, the newspapers reproduced distinctive religious discourse from the political past, borrowed the so-called European war on terrorism and crime frames from the international mainstream public spheres, and applied them to the contemporary Serbian political context.

The framing function is one of the major influences of media domestication and the effects by national political and economic circumstances (Dimitrova, et al., 2005). Callahan, Dubrick, & Olsfski (2006) noted that war is as much a cultural endeavor as it is a military undertaking and that the role of narratives during times of war is crucial in shaping public opinion.

The framing and priming research carried out by Allen, et al. (1994) on media coverage of the Gulf War found that the media's extensive attention and coverage of U.S. technology and weaponry affected public opinion because it reassured the public of the

military's capability for accomplishing the mission and framed the evaluation of the war's success.

To examine the framing of the Iraq war in American and foreign media, Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005) conducted a content analysis of articles in *The New York Times* and a Swedish newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, during the official war period. They concluded that *The New York Times'* coverage embraced the military conflict frame. This frame was defined as having an emphasis on military operations, troops, arsenal, and combat. In contrast, Sweden's *Dagens Nyheter* largely covered global anti-war protests and responsibility issues examining who or what caused the war.

In a study of the coverage of the Iraq war in American, British, Czech, German, South African, and Al-Jazeera news, Kolmer and Semetko (2009) found that, despite some differences among networks within countries, there were major lines of cross-national difference in the subtopics emphasized in the coverage. They concluded that the reporting of the war was influenced by the national and international contexts in which the news was produced.

#### Journalistic Norms in Georgia, the United States, and Russia

Cultural and journalistic values and approaches are expected to shape the way journalists cover events (Schaefer, 2003). As noted earlier, journalists tend to translate the news for the local audience and frame it in ways targeted to the given culture (Clausen, 2003; Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005). In a study on the election coverage in American and Swedish newspapers, Strömbäck and Dimitrova (2006) observed the differences in the selection of the frames. They wrote that the results indicated: "The

framing of politics seems to be informed by the political system, media system, journalistic norms and values, and strength and character of the party system” (p. 143).

Western press tradition derives from an emphasis on facts and empirically-verified events. The U.S. media are seen as operating under the doctrine of professionalism and objectivity (Gans, 1979; Schaefer, 2003; Tuchman, 1978). Consequently, consumers would expect coverage in American media to be objective and more descriptive in style (Schaefer, 2003).

All the international news in Soviet media, including both Georgian and Russian, was previously ideological (McNair, 1991). Each news story had to be approved by Communist Party officials before it reached newspapers and television screens. Still, in a comparative analysis of foreign news on British and the Soviet televisions, McNair found that the Soviet media provided fuller coverage of international news than many British media (McNair, 1988).

The breakup of the Soviet Union resulted in a change in media control mechanisms providing more freedom for criticism of official policy. The media in the former Soviet Union were all government-owned and thus financed, supplied, and distributed by the Communist Party (Remington, 1988).

Currently, news media in Russia are controlled by several large corporations and private owners although the majority of news media outlets still receive funding from the Russian government (Malinkina & McLeod, 2000). Some of the important features of the Russian media in the 1990s following the breakup of the Soviet Union are still prevalent in modern Russian media, which Koltsova (2006) ascribes to the crisis of

legitimacy of old rules and values typical of the period of transformation: “On the contrary, ability to combine facts skillfully with elaborated explanation or emotional judgment without any evident contradictions are sometimes considered a sign of professionalism” (p. 133). Strong control of the government and fear of government intervention compels journalists to exercise self-censorship (Simons & Strovsky, 2006). Despite the changes in Russian media and the political system, censorship and self-censorship are still strongly embedded in the mentality of media makers. Simons and Strovsky (2006) wrote that these features stem from strong cultural traditions built up by political circumstances, particularly the relationship between the authorities and the media, which has become part of a deeply-rooted legacy. The influence of former Russian President Vladimir Putin on the media is an illustration of this tendency (Simon and Strovsky, 2006).

Shortly after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Georgian legal framework for the freedom of expression and speech was put on the agenda of local and international organizations, such as the Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Liberty Institute. Various projects and initiatives that scrutinized government involvement in media decision-making prevented the authorities from controlling the Georgian media. Nevertheless, the number of cases of ill-treatment of journalists and a crackdown on media outlets has been reported by international media and human rights organizations.

The functional problems are also aggravated by lack of funding. There are more than 100 officially-registered newspapers, magazines, news agencies, and TV

stations in Georgia. Newspapers especially suffer from lack of advertising and rely primarily on income from circulation. The quality of news reporting is not satisfactory because most newspapers pay so poorly that journalists must have additional jobs to survive and because so few journalists have valuable professional training (Press Reference, n.d.).

#### Historic Context of the War in Georgia and the Republic of Georgia

To understand the background of the Republic of Georgia and its tenuous relationship with Russia, it is necessary to study its past history.

#### *The History of Georgia Prior to the Rose Revolution*

Georgia is located on the southern slopes of the Caucasus mountains, at the western end of the neck of land which lies between the Black and Caspian Seas and is surrounded by the Russian Federation, including Chechnya, Turkey, Armenia to the south, and Azerbaijan to the east. The Georgian language, spoken by 70% of the population, has a unique alphabet and is related only to a few smaller languages spoken in the Caucasus region. The Georgian principalities became Christian in the fourth century, but remained politically fragmented until the eleventh and twelfth centuries when King David the Builder united them against the Turks. With his reign, a Golden Age began for Georgia. Queen Tamar, King David's granddaughter, ruled a kingdom dominating most of the southern Caucasus, from the north Caucasus highlands to the southern coast of the Black Sea ("*Georgia: What now,*" 2003). But seemingly endless wars led to political decomposition. At the end of the fifteenth century, Georgia was divided into three independent kingdoms: Kartli, Kakheti, and Imereti. The latter, in turn, was further

divided into the kingdoms of Imereti, Samegrelo, Abkhazia, and Guria. King Herekle II signed an alliance with Russian Tsarina Catherine the Great in 1783. But in January of 1801, Tsar Paul I formally annexed eastern Georgia. Shortly afterward, the other principalities were also abolished and included in Russian provinces (“*Georgia: What now,*” 2003).

After several attempts to overthrow Russian rule, the first Republic of Georgia was established on May 26, 1918, following the collapse of tsarist Russia. Before becoming independent, Georgia declared its independence under the protection of Germany to prevent invasions by the Turks. The major European powers recognized Georgia’s independence; however, in February of 1921, the Red Army reoccupied the country and Georgia became part of the Soviet Union.

By the end of the 1980s, the national-liberal movement gained strength and peaceful demonstrations with thousands of participants were organized. At the same time, Gorbachev’s policies of Glasnost helped Georgia secede from the Soviet Union prior to its dissolution. In October of 1990, the opposition’s pressure on the Communist government resulted in a multiparty election. Shortly after the official collapse of the Soviet Union in May of 1991, Zviad Gamsakhurdia became the president of Georgia. On March 23, 1992, Georgia’s independence was recognized by European Union countries. Later that year, on July 31, Georgia joined the United Nations as its 179th plenipotentiary member (Twinning, 1993).

However, soon afterward, civil unrest mounted against president Gamsakhurdia, resulting in civil war in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi. Gamsakhurdia, who was



overthrown under a military revolt in 1991–1992, was accused of being a dictator by radical opposition forces. Eduard Shevardnadze, who has served as a foreign minister of the Soviet Union and as a Communist Party leader in Georgia, returned to Tbilisi in 1992 and was elected president of Georgia in 1993. He remained in power for 10 years and was ultimately ousted following a peaceful revolution in 2003. Although Shevardnadze brought a certain degree of stability to the country, he had little success in resolving the so-called frozen conflicts and in restoring territorial integrity in Georgia (*“Fighting in separatist enclaves,”* 2008; *“Georgia: What now,”* 2003).

Despite Western support, Georgia’s economy kept declining because of Shevardnadze’s weak legislature, economic policy, and increasing corruption of high-ranking officials. In 1999, parliamentary election monitors observed massive fraud, notwithstanding Georgia’s new membership in the Council of Europe. President Shevardnadze was re-elected in 2000 with more than 76% of the votes although independent observers put both figures lower (*“Georgia: What now,”* 2003).

### *Ethnic Conflicts*

In the first years of its independence, two major ethnic conflicts occurred in Georgia, tearing the country into several parts. As a result of these conflicts, about 300,000 people became internally displaced or fled the country as refugees.

*South Ossetia.* A former autonomous region within Georgia, the South Ossetian Democratic Republic was established on September 20, 1990. In 1991, the South Ossetian Democratic Republic declared its independence. Under the leadership of Gamsakhurdia, Georgians resisted all independence efforts and the formation of a South

Ossetian National Guard led to armed confrontation with Georgian forces. There were reports of Russian forces aiding Ossetian rebels. Then-Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Shevardnadze arranged a ceasefire agreement, which was named the Dagomisi Accord. Russian, South Ossetian, and Georgian peacekeeping troops created the buffer zone between South Ossetia and Georgia in July of 1992. Since that time, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Georgia was established to assist Georgia's government in obtaining a peaceful resolution of the conflict (Lynch, 2006).

*Abkhazia.* The Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia is populated by the Abkhaz people who have been seeking independence from Georgia and closer ties with Russia. Both Georgians and Abkhazians claim disputed territory as historically inherited. Serious clashes between Abkhazians, a group of 80,000 people who constitute a 17% minority in the Republic, and Georgians, who constitute a 46% majority, led to a number of deaths in July 1989. Abkhazia declared independence in July of 1992. Armed conflict followed. Soon after the Georgian National Guard began military operations in Abkhazia in August of 1992, both sides entered Russian-mediated ceasefire talks. These agreements resulted in four ceasefire agreements. Since 1993, the United Nations Security Council has been involved in the conflict in a watchdog role and has sent UN observers to monitor the conflict zone. A peacekeeping force of Russian troops, which was formally under the control of the Commonwealth of Independent States, was deployed in a border zone between Georgia and Abkhazia. Although Russia officially maintained neutrality, there were reports that Russian troops in the conflict zone often assisted the Abkhaz forces (Mikaberidze, 2007).

After the failure to restore territorial integrity, Shevardnadze's government engaged in the politics of no-policy toward the secessionist republics (Lynch, 2006).

*Georgia: Rose Revolution*

On November 23, 2003, Georgia entered a new phase of development, both politically and economically, when two opposition parties led by Mikheil Saakashvili (incumbent president of Georgia) and Zurab Zhvania (former State Minister), culminated in the bloodless revolution against the regime of Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze. The revolution, which was later called the Rose Revolution, represented a victory not only for the Georgian people but for global democracy. The Rose Revolution was hailed by observers as a laudable accomplishment, real change, and the end of a corrupt and semi-democratic/semi-autocratic government. President George W. Bush called Georgia a beacon of liberty during his visit to the country shortly after the revolution in May of 2005 (Anabel, 2006; Lynch, 2006).

By the fall of 2003, Shevardnadze had been the leader of Georgia for almost 30 years, with a brief interval between his careers when he served as Soviet foreign minister for Mikheil Gorbachev. The pair embraced the politics of Glasnost and eventually the Soviet Union dissolved. Shevardnadze was viewed by Western politicians and observers as a good politician, but not a real democrat. As Georgia's president, he projected himself as a leader who, because of his background, was uniquely positioned to bring about democracy and political modernity in Georgia. After his party attempted to rig the parliamentary elections in October of 2003, demonstrations led by opposition leaders ended Shevardnadze's presidency ("*Georgia: What now,*" 2003; Lynch, 2006).

By then, corruption in the country was rampant, private sector growth and foreign investment was slow, and many government officials enjoyed ill-gotten wealth and privilege. Shevardnadze's political support within Georgia had begun to erode following his re-election in 2000. Mikheil Saakashvili and Zurab Zhvania had spent years cultivating relationships with American politicians, leaders of non-governmental organizations, and government officials. These relationships were sources of encouragement and support during the period leading up to and including the Rose Revolution (Mitchell, 2008). Western aid to the media and civil society supported the movements in Georgia (Anabel, 2006).

Despite their support of the Rose Revolution, political experts from the United States and Europe started analyzing the possible shortcomings of the newly established Georgian government. Political experts feared that shortly after the Rose Revolution, the expectations of the West would not be met and the Rose Revolution would not lead to the democratic development of the country. Thus, the country could fall back into a state of failure (Lynch, 2006; Welt, 2003).

#### *After the Rose Revolution (2003–present)*

##### *Internal Policy*

Since January of 2004, the new government of Georgia has sought to strengthen the Georgian state: establishing the rule of law and conducting political, economic, and institutional reforms. President Mikheil Saakashvili actively participated in the country's social and economic development. Most of Shevardnadze's statesmen were imprisoned on charges of misappropriation of state funds. Reforms were introduced in education,

health care, law, and the economy. To boost the economic growth of the country, Saakashvili's government improved tax administration and started the fight against corruption. As a result, foreign direct investment increased, businesses started to thrive, and banking services improved significantly (Chipashvili, 2007; Lynch, 2006).

### *Ethnic Conflicts*

*South Ossetia.* In 2005, President Saakashvili announced a peace plan for South Ossetia that offered substantial autonomy and the creation of an international fund to facilitate repatriation and rebuilding. De facto president Eduard Kokoiti rejected the plan, asserting in October of 2005 that South Ossetians were citizens of Russia. The plan has received support from the United States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In December of 2005 South Ossetia issued its own plan, which called for demilitarization, confidence-building measures, and reconstruction aid. At a meeting of the Joint Control Commission on May 11-12, 2006 that was chaired by the Georgian, Russian, North Ossetian, and South Ossetian sides, with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as a facilitator, the parties agreed to try to merge the two peace plans and approved a list of economic rebuilding projects for an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe donors' conference in June 2006 (Lynch, 2006).

In August 2006, South Ossetian de facto president Eduard Kokoiti announced that a referendum would be held in the region on November 12, 2006 to reaffirm its independence. South Ossetian officials reported that 95% of 55,000 registered voters turned out and that 99% approved the referendum on independence. In a separate vote, 96% re-elected Kokoiti. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and

the U.S. State Department declined to recognize these votes. In alternative voting among ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia (and those displaced from South Ossetia) and South Ossetians, the pro-Georgian candidate Dmitry Sanakoyev was elected governor and a referendum was approved supporting Georgia's territorial integrity. Sanakoyev demanded representation from the Joint Control Commission, which was opposed by Kokoiti. On March 26, 2007, Saakashvili proposed a new peace plan for South Ossetia that involved creating administrative districts throughout the region under Sanakoyev's authority, which was not accepted by de facto South Ossetian officials. The Joint Control Commission finally held a meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia, on October 23–24, 2007 but the Russian Foreign Ministry claimed that the Georgian emissaries made unacceptable demands to deliberately sabotage the results of the meeting. No further meetings had been held as of late January of 2008 (Nichole, 2008).

*Abkhazia.* In May 2006, Georgia offered an alternative peace plan, which Abkhazia rejected as unconstructive. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State worked with the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General and The Group of Georgia's Friends to facilitate a settlement. The Group of Georgia's Friends was formed by Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine in 2005 to advocate increased EU and NATO attention toward a settlement. Sticking points have included Georgia's demand that displaced persons be allowed to return to Abkhazia, after which an agreement on autonomy for Abkhazia would be negotiated. The Abkhazians have insisted upon recognition of their independence as a precondition to large-scale repatriation. Since 2002, Abkhaz authorities have refused to consider a

draft negotiating document prepared by the United Nations and the Group of Georgia's Friends. Russia renounced the draft negotiating document by Georgian officials, raising concerns among some observers that Russia might openly endorse Abkhaz independence.

In 2006 the de facto republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia formed a coalition along with another former Soviet republic, Moldova's secessionist region Transdniestria, to jointly work out the strategy for further steps toward independence. After the recognition of Kosovo's independence in 2008, Abkhaz de facto authorities intensified their pledge for independence from Georgia. Russia promised support, and Russian parliament members initiated a discussion to declare Abkhazia's independence (Nichole, 2008).

#### *Foreign Policy*

Georgia's long-term strategy has been to advance its membership in the European Union (EU) and NATO. Georgia maintains a good relationship with U.S. and European states and other former Soviet republics. The Georgian government intensified the dialogue with the EU about Georgia's inclusion in the organization. The negotiation with NATO has become even stronger. However, EU and NATO officials emphasized that Georgia had a lot to accomplish before joining these two bodies: to improve the rule of law and social-economic conditions as well as to pursue a truly democratic development of the country (Lynch, 2006).

#### *Geopolitics—United States, Russia*

After the Rose Revolution, relations between Georgia and Russia deteriorated. The clash between the two states was viewed as a result of the broader strategic

positioning of the West and Russia in and around the South Caucasus. In this scenario, countries and organizations are involved in a struggle for power and energy security (Indans, 2007). Since Georgia forms a gateway linking the Black and Caspian Seas, its location is vital for the control of Central Asia's massive fossil fuel resources and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (Indans, 2007). The United States supported the public-private partnership that built the pipeline to help the region achieve greater economic independence (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Georgia's geographic position is also critical to NATO's ability to secure the Black Sea region, and it allows the United States to project power toward the Middle East (Indans, 2007).

After President Putin came to power in 1998, Russia has favored an economic strategy aimed at regaining influence over the whole Caucasus region by investments in key sectors. Many analysts see a Moscow-Washington competition in Georgia that is one of the few remnants of the Cold War. The post-September 11 security environment and the U.S.-led war on terrorism has fundamentally changed the strategies of the Commonwealth of Independent States since the United States is now willing to assist leaders to guarantee their external security (Indans, 2007; "*Georgia: What now?*" 2003).

*Georgia and Russia.* The conflict between Moscow and Tbilisi goes back to the period of the collapse of the Soviet Union. In April of 1989, Soviet tanks quelled massive demonstrations in the Georgian capital that speeded up Georgia's secession from the USSR two years later. Georgia was the first former Soviet republic to leave the Soviet Union, and relations between it and Russia have been tense ever since Georgia's secession. In 1993, Russian troops intervened in a civil war in support of Eduard



Shevardnadze, the former Georgian president. Since then, tensions have risen steadily over a number of issues, from the presence of Russian military bases in Georgia to Russian allegations that Chechen rebels used Georgia as a safe haven. After Vladimir Putin became president in 2000, the restoration of the Kremlin's authority has become evident. This is the result of the recovery of the Russian economy powered by high oil and gas prices, which have allowed Moscow to rebuild its influence over Georgia, and other energy-poor neighbors. Since the 2003 Rose Revolution, Georgian-Russian relations have become even more complicated. Russia started to feel that its influence over the country and region in general was declining. Russia banned imports of Georgian mineral water and wine and cut air links with Georgia. Although the air links were restored in the beginning of 2008, Georgians viewed these actions as political and retaliated by withholding approval for Russia's bid to join the World Trade Organization (Indans, 2007). After the recognition of Kosovo and Georgia's advance to join NATO in 2008, Russia began openly supporting the Abkhaz and South Ossetian secessionist governments.

*Georgia and the United States.* The United States positioned itself as revisionist in Georgia and tried to ensure the success of the Rose Revolution. Speaking in Freedom Square in Tbilisi on May 10, 2005, President George W. Bush declared that Georgia was sovereign and free and a beacon of liberty in the region and around the world. Political analysts believe that the Bush administration was firmly supporting Georgia (Lynch, 2006).

In strategic terms, America's interests in the region had increased before the Rose Revolution, a consequence of the September 11 attacks (Lynch, 2006). Since 2001, the United States has identified three security interests: to support the development of Georgia's counterterrorist capabilities, to ensure that Georgia and the region does not become a host for international terrorist activities, and to ensure the development and transportation of Caspian Sea hydrocarbon resources to world markets. The Rose Revolution added a fourth interest—to strengthen the Georgian democratic state. In addition, Georgia has become a key U.S. ally in the Black Sea region (Lynch, 2006).

In 2002, the United States launched the Georgia Training and Equipment program, which was designed to train Georgian troops, and, in 2005, the United States launched the Sustainment and Stability Operation Program that is aimed at preparing infantry battalions for peace support operations in Iraq (U.S. Department of State, 2004).

The United States has also supported Georgia's increasingly favorable relations with NATO and the Georgian government's stance on the country's de facto republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2005, the Millennium Challenge Project was started, through which Georgia was awarded \$295.3 million over five years (Lynch, 2006). The 2004 U.S. State Department Agenda on Foreign policy referred to Georgia as a strategic partner. The September, 2006 Agenda on Foreign policy called the country a young and still vulnerable democracy, and stated that the United States and Europe are working together to support the Orange (Ukrainian Revolution in 2004) and Rose revolutions, which inspired freedom-seeking people around the world. Nevertheless, NATO refrained from extending an accession invitation to Georgia in April of 2008 because of Russian

objections to such a move. According to CountryWatch's special report ("*Fighting in separatist enclaves*," 2008), NATO did not, however, exclude the possibility of the country joining the bloc at some point in the future.

*The War in Georgia, 2008*

On August 8, 2008, at about 3a.m. the Georgian military launched an attack against separatist targets in South Ossetia. The Georgian administration said it had been forced to retaliate after coming under continued and sustained attacks from the South Ossetian side. After days of heavy exchanges of fire with South Ossetian separatist fighters and several fruitless attempts to arrange peace talks, the Georgian side called a unilateral ceasefire. But five and a half hours later, after the disregard of ceasefire pleas from the separatist authorities in South Ossetia, the call for peace by the Georgian administration changed. The defense ministry of Georgia, under Davit Kezerashvili, announced that it had sent troops into South Ossetia to restore constitutional order in the entire region. Fierce fighting erupted around the South Ossetian capital city of Tskhinvali, and Georgian war planes were reported to be in action bombing the town and surrounding areas. Speaking on the morning of August 8, Georgian Prime Minister Lado Gurgenidze said there had also been reports of an infiltration of so-called volunteer fighters from North Ossetia coming through the Roki tunnel, which links South Ossetia to Russia ("*Fighting in separatist enclaves*," 2008).

The South Ossetian de facto leader Eduard Kokoity said that Georgia was carrying out an attack on Tskhinvali. Eyewitnesses on the ground said that the city was

under attack, the hospital had been destroyed, and the university was on fire. The Red Cross reported that there were numerous casualties needing medical attention.

In response, Russia deployed troops to South Ossetia to assist peacekeepers in Tskhinvali and bombed the town from warplanes. But Russian authorities had a counter-argument to justify their presence there. They have accused Georgia of deliberately ramping up its military presence in breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and assuming a hard-line posture against these enclaves.

Georgia's government has long accused Russia of arming South Ossetian separatists and aiding them in staging the provocations in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone. Additionally, almost 90% of South Ossetians were granted Russian citizenships. Consequently, with vested interests on both sides of the border, Russia called for an end to the ongoing violence. Russia also urged the international community to work cooperatively to avert massive bloodshed and new victims (*"Fighting in separatist enclaves,"* 2008).

On August 9, 2008, Russian jets bombed Georgian military targets, specifically in the Georgian town of Gori in South Ossetia's southern region. The Georgian leadership described the air strikes as a full-scale military invasion, and Georgian President Saakashvili stated that Russia was at war with his country.

In the United States, President George W. Bush called for a ceasefire and said that he supported the sovereignty of Georgia. The international community condemned Russia's actions and said it was an intrusion into a sovereign country.

Russia had a different perspective and put the blame on the Georgians. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicated the dire nature of the situation by asserting that 1,500 South Ossetians had died in the conflict and more than 30,000 people had fled into Russia to escape the threat of death. However, the official reports about the number of casualties were revised later, and instead of 1,500 deaths, there were 133 reported dead on the South Ossetian side.

During Russia's five day peace-enforcement operation , 15 Georgian cities were bombed, killing 215 people, including members of the Georgian militaries and leaving more than 150,000 displaced from both sides. The Russian government said that it had to act to protect the South Ossetians. Russian President Dmitri Medvedev said that Georgia also bore a responsibility for protecting the South Ossetian population and that his country's military action was intended to force the Georgian side to peace.

Russian military planes carried out air strikes on Georgian military bases. Shells were also dropped in civilian districts, which the Russian military claimed was a mistake. On August 9, Georgian President Saakashvili called for an end to hostilities. In Georgia, the parliament approved a presidential decree that imposed two weeks of martial law on the country. An action in the Black Sea off Abkhazia resulted in one Georgian missile boat being sunk by the Russian Navy. The Russians claimed that the Georgian ships entered the security zone of the Russian war ships and that the action of the Russian Navy was in accordance with international law. After the skirmish, the remaining Georgian ships withdrew (*"Fighting in separatist enclaves"* 2008).

A second front was opened by the military of Georgia's separatist Republic of

Abkhazia in the Kodori Gorge. A day later, on August 10, 2008, Georgia said that it was withdrawing its troops from the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali in the face of Russia's counter-offensive. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said Georgian troops were returning to the positions they held before the conflict erupted days earlier.

In addition to the declaration of a withdrawal of troops from Tskhinvali, Georgian authorities also submitted a note to the Russian embassy in Tbilisi calling for immediate negotiations with Russia regarding an end to all hostilities and a ceasefire. Russia confirmed that the note had been received. Georgian authorities claimed that Russian air strikes had targeted populated areas but these claims were denied by Kremlin authorities.

Movement toward a resolution seemed no closer on August 11, 2008. Georgian authorities said that Russian air strikes hit communications facilities to the west of Tbilisi and the Black Sea port city of Poti (*"Fighting in separatist enclaves,"* 2008).

The United Nations Security Council convened six emergency sessions to consider the rapidly deteriorating security crisis in the Caucasus. The United States sent a delegation to the region to try to negotiate a resolution. The European Union delegation said that it hoped to procure a ceasefire and withdrawal agreement from both Georgia and Russia (*"Fighting in separatist enclaves,"* 2008).

On August 11 and 12, Russian tanks and troops advanced deeper into Georgia, occupying a number of cities in coastal western Georgia, almost the entire seashore, and the east-west border of the country. Russian troops and South Ossetian military were reported to be looting the homes of Georgians.

On August 12, five presidents from the Eastern European countries of Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, the Ukraine, and Poland arrived to show their support for the country and to stop Russian forces that, at the time, were moving toward the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. On behalf of the European Union (EU), French President Nicolas Sarkozy led diplomatic negotiations to help Georgia and Russia resolve the crisis. Sarkozy put forth a peace agreement that both sides signed. Central to the proposed six-point plan was that all forces would pull back to pre-conflict positions. Other elements of the plan included an end to the use of force, an end to military action in perpetuity, and free access to humanitarian aid. Despite the signed cease-fire agreement, Russian troops further occupied several cities outside the conflict zone in both eastern and western Georgia.

On August 17, 2008, Russia officially pledged to start withdrawing forces from Georgian territory in keeping with the agreement. At the time, however, its forces had control over large parts of Georgian territory, including the country's main east-west highway. Meanwhile, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev told French President Nicolas Sarkozy that the Russian withdrawal would be complete by August 22, 2008, although about 500 troops would be installed as peacekeepers on both sides of South Ossetia's border. But it was not until August 22 that Russian troops started leaving Georgian cities. Medvedev's government said that Russian peacekeepers were allowed to take additional security measures and create buffer zones around the conflict regions. However, the United States and the United Kingdom countered this claim noting that such buffer zones would violate the truce (*"Fighting in separatist enclaves,"* 2008). On

August 26, Medvedev announced that humanitarianism dictated that Russia recognize the independence of the regions, and he called on other countries to also extend diplomatic recognition. The decision was condemned by the West.

In other developments, the first U.S. ship with humanitarian aid docked in Georgia in the last week of August of 2008. By the beginning of September 2008, the EU decided to suspend talks on a new partnership pact with Russia given the still-incomplete withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia (*"Fighting in separatist enclaves,"* 2008). The European bloc's Foreign Policy Chief, Javier Solana, said that the EU could deploy civilian monitors to Georgia to determine whether Russia was complying with the ceasefire agreement that had been previously brokered. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that unchecked support by the EU and the United States for the government of Georgia would be a historic mistake. Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev stated that his country's foreign policy would not be dictated by the United States. The media and political observers speculated about the return of the Cold War between the West and Russia (*"Fighting in separatist enclaves,"* 2008).

Russia's invasion in Georgia was regarded by Western political analysts as part of an increase in tensions between Washington and Moscow. In an analysis of the war in Georgia, the Center for Strategic and International Studies issued a report, the opening lines of which said: "The current fighting in Georgia brings out many ghosts of the past" (Chow, 2008, p.1). An International Crisis Group report (*"Russia vs. Georgia,"* 2008) stated that the Russia-Georgia conflict has transformed the contemporary geopolitical world, with large consequences for peace and security in Europe and beyond. The Crisis



Group experts wrote that Russia's move was, in part, a response to a miscalculation by a Georgian leadership that was impatient with gradual confidence building in the secessionist region and a Russian-dominated negotiations process. But Russia's disproportionate counter-attack, with the movement of a large number of troops into Abkhazia and deep into Georgia accompanied by the widespread destruction of the economic infrastructure, damage to the economy, a disruption of communications and movement between different regions of the country, constituted a dramatic shift in Russian-Western relations.

### Theoretical Framework

Framing theories make the argument that media organize large amounts of information into manageable and recognizable frames that allow for conveying a meaning that is understandable to an audience. By including and/or excluding certain events or aspects of news, journalists give salience/emphasis to that particular information (Entman, 1991, 1993). Through the use of various language and discourse devices, the information becomes memorable, thus affecting the awareness of the audience regarding particular issues (Entman, 1993; Pan and Kosicki, 1993, 2001). Goffman (1974) and Entman (1993, 1991, 2004) discussed the significance of text and its attributes (key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences) in construction of news frames. Entman (1991) gave a more thorough definition to the frames within narratives, which is one of the guidelines for determining the frames in the study:

Since the narrative finally consists of nothing more than words and pictures, frames can be detected by probing for particular words and visual images that consistently appear in a narrative and convey thematically consonant meanings across media and time. (p. 7)

By using these techniques, journalists can frame issues either to enlarge the significance of an event or to shrink an event (Entman, 1993, 2004). Frequent repetition and redundancy increase the probability that citizens use particular information delivered to them (Entman, 1991, 1993, 2004). These definitions guided the present researcher to determine the frames in the coverage of *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. This study also looked at thematic and episodic news frame types proposed by Iyengar and Simon (1993) in their study of the first Gulf War.

Previous framing studies of conflicts and wars have shown that the press puts greater emphasis on the military portion of the conflict (Dimitrova, et al., 2005; Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005; Kolmer & Semetko, 2009). Primarily based on these framing studies the major framing categories were developed and used as the foundation of this study.

Crucial for this thesis was the study by Yoon and Gwangho (2002), who conducted a framing study on the Japanese and South Korean media coverage of the Tokdo conflict (a disputed territory between Japan and South Korea). The authors concluded that the media of both nations carried stories that supported the official positions of their home governments and that reflected their foreign policies.

Another important study used in this research is by Kolmer and Semetko (2009), who conducted a study of the coverage of the Iraq war in American, British,

Czech, German, South African, and Al-Jazeera TV news. They found major lines of cross-national differences in the subtopics emphasized in the coverage. They concluded that the reporting of the war was influenced by the national and international contexts in which the news was produced. Schaefer (2003), in his research on the coverage of the U.S. embassy bombings and the September 11 attacks in African and American newspapers, found that cultural and journalistic values and approaches shaped the way journalists covered the events.

Central to this thesis was the research by Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005), who studied the coverage of the Iraq war in *The New York Times* and the Swedish paper, *Dagens Nyheter*, during the official war period. They concluded that, in *The New York Times*, the military conflict frame was the dominant frame; its focus was on military operations, troops, arsenal, and combat. But Sweden's *Dagens Nyheter* largely covered global anti-war protests and responsibility issues. Another factor that can affect war reporting is the proximity versus stream of global issues, as discussed in Ruigrok and Atteveldt's (2007) framing research. In their framing study of the U.S., British, and Dutch newspapers' coverage of global and local terrorist attacks, the authors concluded that, although proximity was a strong determinant of focus, the framing was affected more by the global event of 9/11 than by local considerations in the media's home countries.

## Research Questions

By examining news coverage of the war in Georgia through a study of Georgian, American, and Russian media, this study is designed to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What frames were dominant in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*?

RQ2: What sources did *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* use in their coverage of the war in Georgia?

RQ3: To what extent, if any, did *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* use episodic and thematic frames?

RQ4: Did the use of episodic and thematic frames differ in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*?

RQ5: Did the use of the dominant frames differ across the three newspapers?

RQ6: How did the dominant frames used in *Resonance* compare with those used in *Izvestia*?

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The purpose of the study was to examine the framing of the 2008 war in Georgia in the newspaper coverage of *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. To determine the frames used by the three newspapers in the coverage of the war in Georgia, a quantitative and a descriptive framing analysis was conducted. The combination of the two methods was thought to result in a more thorough understanding of the frames utilized by the media. In divided, two-sided conflicts with strong reactions to extreme political or military violence, each society may offer a different interpretation of events and images (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003). To deal with these disparities, the quantitative framing method was regarded to be sufficient vis-à-vis cultural analysis of the coverage, which can be prone to subjective influence. When analyzing media coverage, a comparative study helps the researcher to make a distinction among the frames that journalists build into their narratives (Entman, 1991; Schaefer, 2003). Frames are likely to come into sharpest focus when similar news stories are compared through different cultures (Schaefer, 2003). Comparative research enables the expansion of the empirical database (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006).

#### Publications Analyzed

Georgia's *Resonance*, Russia's *Izvestia*, and America's *The New York Times* were analyzed for this thesis. The analysis of leading newspapers in these countries should contribute to knowledge about how the media frame conflicts.

*Resonance*, a leading daily national newspaper in Georgia has 18% of the entire newspaper market in Georgia (Personal communication with Lasha Tugushi, editor-in-chief of *Resonance*, September 20, 2008). Founded as a weekly newspaper in 1990, *Resonance* switched to daily distribution in 1992. It also produces weekly editions called *Sunday Resonance* and *Whole Week*. *Resonance*, which has a circulation of 8,000, is the main source of information for political and intellectual elites. The paper covers political, economic, and socio-cultural events and offers quality in-depth analysis. On a continuum ranging from tabloid to elite, *Resonance* occupies the middle and is among Georgia's three leading newspapers. The paper prides itself on its timeliness, objectivity, and impartiality.

The winner of 94 Pulitzer Prizes, *The New York Times* has been published since 1851. Owned by The New York Times Media Group, *The New York Times* is a leader on the U.S. media market and is the main source of information for at least 61% of opinion leaders. The paper's average net paid circulation reaches 1million print copies daily and almost 1.5 million on Sundays (New York Times Media kit, n.d.).

Published since 1917, *Izvestia* is Russia's leading national daily newspaper. For decades, it has been renowned for having the most comprehensive news coverage and in-depth analysis, with a circulation of 234,500 copies daily (the paper is not published during the weekends). Originally founded as a newspaper by the Petrograd Council of Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants, *Izvestia* became one of the most powerful newspapers in the Soviet Union (Malinkina & McLeod 2000). Today, *Izvestia* has secured its

independence as a joint-stock company. According to Malinkina and McLeod (2000), the newspaper is regarded as the most influential in Russia.

#### Data Collection

The content was selected from August 8, 2008 through October 8, 2008, from the beginning of the war to the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgian-controlled territories.

All articles about the Georgian conflict were used in all three newspapers selected. Extensive searches were performed using the online databases of *The New York Times* and *Izvestia* to collect every news article within the specified time period. The sample was sorted into 100 online articles from *The New York Times*, 189 online articles from *Izvestia*, and 275 articles from the printed version of *Resonance*. Because the number of paragraphs in the news stories in *The New York Times* was about twice as many as in *Resonance* and *Izvestia*, a random sample of briefs was drawn from both *Resonance* and *Izvestia* in an effort to compare a relatively equal numbers of paragraphs across each newspaper.

#### Coding Process

All the articles about the war in Georgia falling under the time frame (August, 8 through October, 8, 2008) were coded, except for the articles that mentioned only the event or the country. The unit of analysis for the dependent variables was the paragraph. The frames were coded on the basis of how many were present in each story. Types of articles that were coded were hard news, including news stories, news briefs, news analysis, and news features. All relevant articles were coded as follows: (1) story, (2)

number of frames occurring in each paragraph, (3) number of frame types occurring in each paragraph, (4) type of article, (5) source of the story, and (6) staff byline.

A source of attribution was defined as a name of a person or an organization associated with direct quotes or reported speech in a story. The types of sources included governmental officials, the presidents, militaries, experts, victims, business officials, representatives of international organizations (the United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and NATO), international observers, and other sources, including ordinary people.

#### *Measurement*

There are two possible approaches to content analysis of frames in the news: inductive and deductive (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The inductive approach involves measuring the frames with an open view to identify the possible frames. A deductive approach involves pre-defined frames as content-analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Keywords and key phrases found in the texts were used to identify the frames, as proposed by Entman (1993), in addition to the latent meaning behind them. Since no standard set of frames exist for analyzing specific conflicts, the frames used for this study were based on frames found in previous research (Dimitrova, et al., 2005; Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005; Gamson, 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) as well as frames identified in a preliminary analysis.

For frames that were derived by the author through preliminary analysis, a sample of 80 randomly-selected news stories that were not in the sample and that were



published after the conflict were selected and analyzed from *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. In addition, the background context was examined by the author to identify framing categories relevant to the study.

### *Frame Definitions*

The stories were coded according to the following frames (for a fuller definition of frames see Appendix A):

1. *Military conflict frame*. This frame emphasizes military action and military conflict, focusing on the troops, combat, description of the weaponry, technological capabilities, and prisoners of war.
2. *Violence of war frame*. This frame emphasizes the destruction caused by war, including destroyed buildings, injuries, casualties, and the aftermath of bombings.
3. *General political frame*. This frame emphasizes the political framework of the conflict rather than combat. This includes the quotes and statements by government officials, presidents of Georgia, Russia, the United States, France, and others. It also includes the statements made by representatives of the United Nations Security Council, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and NATO.
4. *Self-defense frame*. This frame focuses on the Georgian government's military action in South Ossetia and describes it as the only means to contain the violence by South Ossetian illegal groupings.

5. *Aggressor frame.* This frame focuses on Georgian government and troops as aggressors who attacked South Ossetia.
6. *Invader frame.* This frame focuses on the Russian government and troops and depicts them as the violators of the Georgia's territorial integrity.
7. *Legitimization of the war frame.* Following the statements by Russian officials, this frame emphasizes the legitimate character of Russia's invasion in Georgia as part of the peace-enforcement operation.
8. *Strategic interest frame.* This frame shows Georgia as a strategic country where Russia and the United States have certain economic and military interest. Consequently the war was viewed as a global conflict.
9. *Georgia's territorial integrity frame.* This frame puts emphasis on the territorial integrity of Georgia, suggesting that the South Ossetia is its historical part not the independent territorial entity equal to any other de jure nation state in the world.
10. *Expansionism frame: Russia.* This frame emphasizes Russia's intent to exercise its influence on its neighboring countries (Georgia, Ukraine). The term expansionism was borrowed from Gamson's (1992) frame of Israeli expansionism, which the author extracted from the material on the Israeli–Arab conflict. According to Gamson (1992) Israeli expansionism means the desire of the Israeli government for more territory and influence in the region.
11. *Expansionism frame: West.* This frame shows the West's intent to extend its influence over the Eastern European region, particularly in post-Soviet Georgia and Ukraine. In this case it is be in reference to the Post Soviet Georgia and

Ukraine. This frame includes the discussions about Georgia's accession into NATO and the European Union. For further clarification of the term expansionism, see frame Number10.

12. *East-West frame.* This frame focuses on the tensions between the United States and Russia. Geopolitical aspects and balance of power issues are discussed.
13. *Georgian civilians.* This frame focuses on the depiction of the plight of Georgians who were affected by the war.
14. *South Ossetian civilians.* This frame focuses on the plight of the South Ossetians who were affected by the war.
15. *Russian civilians.* This frames focuses on the description of Russian civilians who were affected by the war.
16. *Georgian expatriates.* This frame focuses on Georgians living abroad and the specific frames showing their connection to the conflict.
17. *Georgian soldiers.* This frame focuses on Georgian soldiers and their portrayal outside the military setting. The soldiers were described and interviewed in relation to their ordinary lives outside of combat.
18. *Russian soldiers.* This frame focuses on Russian soldiers and their portrayal outside the military setting. The soldiers were described and interviewed in relations to their ordinary lives outside of combat.
19. *Georgia's President Mikheil Saakashvili.* This frame exclusively focuses on the images of Mikheil Saakashvili and/or his governance.

20. *Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin*. This frame includes the images of Vladimir Putin and/or his governance.
21. *Russia's President Dimitry Medvedev*. This frame focuses on the images of Russia's President Dimitry Medvedev and/or his governance.
22. *France's President Nicolas Sarkozy*. This frame focuses on France's president Sarkozy, who was the key mediator in the war in Georgia.
23. *U.S. President George W. Bush*. This frame focuses on the framing of the president of the United States and his response to the war.
24. *Diagnostic frame*. This frame is described by Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005, p. 409) as "giving the detailed and broader discussion of what caused the event."
25. *Prognostic frame*. This frame includes content on the political, economic, and military consequences of the war.
26. *Attribution of responsibility frame*. This frame is used in reference to a newspaper or its sources holding Georgian, South Ossetian, Russian, or the U.S. governments responsible for the war.

#### Intercoder Reliability

The coding was done by the researcher with 20% of the stories double coded by second and third coders to ensure the reliability of the frames. The second coder coded a sample of 10% of the American and 10% of the Russian news stories (28 stories altogether). The third coder coded a sample of 10% or 27 of the Georgian news stories. Scott's pi ( $\pi$ ) formula was used to determine intercoder reliability:

$$\pi = \frac{\% \text{ observed agreement} - \% \text{ expected agreement}}{1 - \% \text{ expected agreement}}$$

The overall reliability was 98% across all categories, ranging from 85% to 100%.

The percentages for intercoder reliability for each variable are listed in the codebook in Appendix A.

To conduct the statistical analysis, the statistical program SPSS was used.

Analyses of variance (ANOVA), and independent sample *t*-tests were used to determine if there were any statistical differences across the three publications.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This study examined the frames used in the coverage of the war in Georgia by *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* between August 8, 2008 and October 8, 2008. The analysis was based on 564 articles were analyzed from the three publications for a total of 6,687 paragraphs. The article breakdown is as follows: 275 were from *Resonance*, 189 from *Izvestia*, and 100 from *The New York Times*. Overall, five main sets of frames were identified in the study: war frames, political frames, diplomatic frames, human interest frames, and causality frames. The news items were analyzed for a two-month period, with the amount of coverage differing throughout the period. Significantly more articles were published at the inception of combat, which resulted in repetitive and recurrent coverage of the same events. As time progressed, the number of articles relating to the conflict decreased, which coincided with the declining importance of political and military events.

The comparative analysis of three publications enables an examination of differing perspectives and approaches to the reporting of the war in Georgia. The comparative analysis allows for a broader outlook on how national and foreign policy interests and values, both professional and personal, intersect with reporting practices. It provides more insight into what the media deliver to the public locally and internationally. Most of the 26 frames that were used for the analysis were grouped into 19 main frames. Five sets of frames were constructed for the analysis: war, political, diplomatic, human interest, and causality sets of frames. The military conflict and

military violence frames were combined into the military frame. The self-defense and legitimization of war frames were combined into rationalization of war frames. Aggressor and invader frames were combined into a portrayal of combatants frame. These three main frames were further included in the set of war frames. Frames on Georgian civilians, South Ossetian civilians, Russian civilians, Georgian expatriates, Georgian soldiers, and Russian soldiers were incorporated into the set of human interest frames. The strategic interest frame, Georgia's territorial integrity frame, Russian expansionism frame, Western expansionism frame, and the East-West frame were combined into a diplomatic set of frames. President Saakashvili's frame, Prime minister Putin's frame, France's President Sarkozy's frame, and Russian President Medvedev's frame were combined into the set of political actor frames. Surprisingly enough, American President George W. Bush's frame did not appear at all in any of the publications. Although president Bush was mentioned, the stories did not provide a Bush frame. The political actor frame, the general political frame, and the attribution of responsibility frame were combined into the set of political frames. The prognostic and diagnostic frames were combined into the set of causality frames. The reason for merging the frames was to build frames that were predominant in the three newspapers and that were feasible for statistical analysis

#### Descriptive Analysis of Frames

This section answers the first three research questions and provides an overview of the frames, the types of frames, and the sources of attribution used in the coverage of *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*.

### *Research Question 1*

What frames were dominant in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*?

The coding was conducted to identify 26 frames in the articles of *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. See Appendix A for a full definition of frames. It should be noted that, although the unit of the analysis for the coding was the paragraph, the percentages are based on the number of stories coded. Table 1 shows that the set of war frames was predominant in the coverage of *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. As shown in Table 1, the war frames were present in 47% of the stories in *Resonance*, 49.7% of the stories in *Izvestia*, and 80% of the stories in *The New York Times*. The political frames were the second most dominant set of frames in the coverage of all three publications. The causality frames were the third most dominant frames in *Resonance* and *Izvestia*. For *Resonance*, the human interest frames ranked fourth and diplomatic frames ranked fifth. For *Izvestia*, diplomatic frames ranked fourth and human interest frames ranked fifth. For *The New York Times*, the diplomatic set of frames was the third dominant set. The causality frames ranked fourth and the human interest frames ranked fifth in *The New York Times*.

As Table 1 shows, the most striking finding is the sheer number of frames in *The New York Times* as compared with *Resonance* and *Izvestia*. It should be noted here that many of the stories in *Resonance* and *Izvestia* did not contain any of the frames. This is why the frames were grouped into five dominant sets to have sufficient data for statistical analyses.



Table 1

Dominant Frames in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*

	<i>Resonance</i> (n=275)	<i>Izvestia</i> (n=189)	<i>Times</i> (n=100)
Dominant Frames	%	%	%
<b>War</b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>80.0</b>
Military	36.4	29.1	67.0
Rationalization of war	4.4	15.9	31.0
Portrayal of combatants	12.4	18.0	33.0
<b>Political</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>74.0</b>
General political	24.7	24.9	66.0
Political actors	1.1	4.8	13.0
Attribution of responsibility	4.4	6.3	15.0
<b>Diplomatic</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>68.0</b>
Territorial integrity	7.3	1.6	14.0
Strategic interest	0.7	0.5	8.0
Russian expansionism	4.7	2.1	43.0
Western influence	4.0	1.6	24.0
East-West	5.8	9.5	41.0
<b>Human interest</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>24.0</b>
Georgian civilians	14.9	3.2	16.0
Georgian soldiers	0.4	0.5	2.0
South Ossetian civilians	1.1	0.5	6.0
Georgian expatriates	1.5	0.5	—
Russian civilians	0.4	0.5	1.0
Russian soldiers	0.4	—	2.0
<b>Causality</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>29.0</b>
Prognostic	18.5	8.5	29.0
Diagnostic	6.9	5.8	20.0

*Note.* The percentages are based on the total number of stories that contained content categorized as fitting into (1) the five overall dominant frame categories and (2) each of the subframes listed under the dominant frames.

### *War Frames*

The results in Table 1 showed that the set of war frames was the most powerful set of frames found in the coverage, indicating that all three newspapers portrayed the war through a military lens. The coverage of combat operations was reported in relation to overall military strategies. Most of the sources of attribution were employed and referenced to relate to the category of war frames.

The war frames were composed of three main frames: military frame, rationalization of war frame, and portrayal of combatants frame. The military frame dominated the set of war frames, appearing in 36.4% of stories in *Resonance*, 29.1% of stories in *Izvestia*, and 67% of stories in *The New York Times*. Refer to Table 1 for complete results. The military frame depicted the conflict from the militaristic approach, emphasizing military actions, destruction caused by the war, military confrontation, and refugees.

Although the military frame was predominant in the set of war frames in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*, the publications emphasized different aspects of the military frame. *Resonance* focused more on the destruction caused by the war, including destroyed buildings, destroyed cities, numbers of injured casualties, refugees, and acts of marauding and looting. The theme of military violence ran throughout the coverage emerging in news stories, news briefs, and news features. An example of the violence of war theme is the following paragraph in the August 10, 2008 issue of *Resonance*:

The city of Gori is expecting to be shelled by Russian jets at any time. Military personnel and reservists are deployed throughout the city; the local population is being evacuated. The first explosion was heard in the city yesterday morning at 10:20. It should be mentioned that the targets of Russian military jets were Georgian military bases. Nevertheless, the bombs hit the civilian buildings that resulted in the death of the peaceful population and destruction of the city center. (Karchava & Putkaradze, 2008, p. 3)

*Izvestia* focused its coverage on the combat, military strategies, military confrontation, description of the weaponry, technological capabilities of the Georgian and the Russian military, and the capture of military weaponry. In an August 18 news brief, *Izvestia* wrote:

The Russian military captured 150 pieces of heavy artillery in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone belonging to Georgian military. The captured weaponry included 65 tanks, 21 of which were destroyed. The remaining 44 were sent to North Ossetia where they will be handed to Russian militaries. The rest of the weaponry will be delivered to Vladikavkaz soon. (*Russian Defense Ministry*, 2008)

The military frame was found at every stage of the war in all three publications as the result of the slow, reluctant withdrawal of the Russian troops from Georgian territory after the end of combat. It peaked after U.S. military ships started docking in the Georgian port in the middle of August of 2008, bringing in humanitarian aid.

The same facets of the military frame were obvious in *The New York Times*. The first sentence of the story in *The New York Times* on August 9 read: “Russian air attacks over northern Georgia intensified on Saturday morning, striking two apartment buildings in the city of Gori and clogging roads out of the area with fleeing refugees” (Shwartz, Barnard, & Chivers 2008).

Unlike its news briefs, many of the news stories in *Izvestia* did not fit into the coverage of the military frame, especially at the inception of the conflict. Russia became involved in the war on August 8, the same day Georgia launched its military campaign to regain administrative control in South Ossetia. It is also important to note that refugees and civilian victims of the war were almost invisible in the coverage of *Izvestia*. Instead, the more abstract statements about the violence of war were made by journalists without attribution.

For the most part, the violence of war coverage in *Resonance* and *Izvestia* was based on information from eyewitnesses to the war such as soldiers, refugees, government sources, and military experts. However, for both newspapers, there were no sources for the information included in the stories.

Another frame that emerged within the set of the war frames was the rationalization of war frame. This frame is based on the self-justification for waging the war by the Georgian and Russian governments. When the war broke out on August 8, *Resonance* quoted Georgian government officials as declaring that they sent the troops to the breakaway republic of South Ossetia for self-defense, since hostilities had been intense in the conflict zone for more than a month. Russian officials responded with military involvement. To justify their actions, Russian officials were often quoted as contending that their response was legitimate and that Russia acted as a protector of the breakaway republic of South Ossetia.

The rationalization of war frame was treated differently in the three publications. As shown in Table 1, in *Resonance*, it appeared in 4.4% of the stories, in

*Izvestia* in 15.1% of the stories, and in *The New York Times* in 31% of the stories. The rationalization of war frame was primarily observed in the early days of the conflict, which coincided with the actual combat period, August 8-August 12 and August, 12-August 22, 2008. The legitimization of war theme appeared either directly or indirectly in the coverage. Russian officials were quoted as stating that they could not allow Georgia to violate the rights of the South Ossetian civilians. A news story published on August 12, 2008 in *Izvestia*'s political section noted:

Without any doubt, the operation for peace-enforcement will be completed in Georgia. President Dimitry Medvedev declared that it is impossible to deal with Georgia in any other way. Russia is not going to concede the lives of Russian citizens and Russian peacekeepers. We have always been the guarantors of peace in the Caucasus and have never positioned ourselves as passive observers. All the resources necessary to enforce peace in the region will be provided. (Shukshina, 2008)

The third and the last frame within the set of the war frames was the portrayal of combatants frame. This frame focused on the Georgian and Russian governments and troops and referred to them as to aggressors in the case of Georgia and as invaders in the case of Russia. The frame is related to the way in which Russia and Georgia referred to each other in the context of the war. In *Resonance*, the portrayal of combatants frame appeared in 12.4% of the stories; in *Izvestia* it was present in 18% of the stories, and in *The New York Times* it was present in 33% of the stories.

The words "invasion" and "occupation" were used to refer to the Russian troops who invaded and occupied Georgian territories. Such a depiction was mostly found in the coverage of *Resonance* and *The New York Times*. In *Izvestia* it was conveyed through statements by government or military officials. The statements were eventually

countered by responses from Russian officials. The portrayal of the Georgian government and Georgian troops as aggressors was the most explicit in *Izvestia's* coverage. The frame was illustrated by presenting the Georgian government and military as aggressors who viciously attacked the breakaway republic of South Ossetian. It should be noted that *The New York Times* portrayed Russia as being an invader.

### *Political Frames*

The set of political frames is the second most dominant frame in the coverage of *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. This set was composed of the general political, political actors, and attribution of responsibility frames. The general political frame was the most prevalent among the three, appearing in 24.7% of the stories in *Resonance*, 24.9% of the stories in *Izvestia*, and in 66% of the stories in *The New York Times*.

The general political frame described the issues of conflict resolution, in particular the steps that were to be taken to resolve the conflict, the details of negotiations, official meetings, the ceasefire, and peacekeepers. The political climate in Georgia and Georgian-Russian tension themes were also included within the general political frame. The general political frame also provided a discussion of the stalemate in the fulfillment of the agreement by the sides and the political issues related to the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgian territory. For example, the story in the September 2 issue of *The New York Times* noted:

Europe will send a fact-finding mission to the region before the deployment of a European Observer mission. Europeans have vowed to aid Georgia, including

increased reconstruction aid and a donor conference, an easier visa system for its citizens, and a possible free trade agreement. (Castle & Erlanger, 2008)

The political frame was dominated by quotes and statements from high-ranking United Nations, NATO, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and EU officials. A large portion of the political frame was dedicated to the issue of Russia's recognition of Georgia's breakaway republic of South Ossetia. Overall, the publications did not differ dramatically in the way the general political frame was depicted. On August 20, an article in *Resonance* stated:

The NATO decree regarding the current situation in Georgia has already been published. According to the document, NATO states expressed their concern and have called on Russian officials to immediately stop hostilities and to withdraw their forces from Georgian territory. The issues regarding the status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia should be further negotiated. (Machaidze, 2008a, p. 1)

Government officials from Georgia and Russia held each other responsible for the war. In addition, Russian officials blamed the U.S. government for encouraging Georgia. But the percentage of stories with this frame was very small. The attribution of responsibility was manifested in statements by the government and military officials who argued that Georgia, Russia, or the United States was responsible for the war.

The political actors' frame is the third group in the set of political frames. It was expected that the main political actors involved in the war in Georgia would be portrayed in the coverage of *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* and that those individuals would include Georgia's president Mikheil Saakashvili, Russia's President Dimitry Medvedev, Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, U.S. President George W. Bush, and France's President Nicolas Sarkozy. The study found that the political actors'

frame was dominated by the portrayal of Georgia's president Mikheil Saakashvili in the coverage in *The New York Times*, appearing in 13% of the stories. In contrast, this frame appeared in *Resonance* in 1.1% of the stories and in 4.8% of the stories in *Izvestia*.

*Izvestia* and *The New York Times* gave a differing perspective on the portrayal of Saakashvili. In *Izvestia* he was portrayed as a "madman," an unfriendly and hateful neighbor who practiced aggressive politics in South Ossetia. Saakashvili and his leadership were mocked and ridiculed as pawns of the United States. On August 13, a story in *Izvestia* read: "The international community should take a new perspective on the existing situation to see how the crazy actions of Saakashvili has made him lose credibility as a leader of the country, not only for South Ossetians" (Fokina, 2008).

In *The New York Times*, the portrayal of Saakashvili focused on his biography and his political path:

Mr. Saakashvili belongs to a generation of young men and women from the former Soviet Union who were educated in the West but returned to their home countries. He proudly professes to hold American values. His personal, fierce allegiance to the United States, where he became a successful lawyer, has helped make Georgia, a onetime backwater, into a pivotal country in the politics of the post-Soviet era. (Kramer, 2008)

In addition to Saakashvili, Russian Prime Minister (and former president) Vladimir Putin emerged in the political actors frame, but mostly in *The New York Times*. The publication portrayed him as a stern politician whose political powers have strong pull, even in the current Russian administration.



The frames of presidents Sarkozy and Medvedev did not have sufficient coverage in the stories of *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. President Bush's biographical portrait did not appear at all in the coverage of the three newspapers.

#### *Diplomatic Frames*

Another set of frames that emerged in the examination of the frames in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* was the diplomatic set of frames. Table 1 shows that the diplomatic frames accounted for 68% of the stories in *The New York Times*, making it the paper's third dominant set. In *Resonance*, the diplomatic frame was present in 14.5 % of the stories, and in *Izvestia*, it appeared in 12.7 % of the stories. This set consisted of Georgia's territorial integrity frame, strategic interest frame, Russian expansionism frame, Western influence frame, and the East-West tension frame. The East-West tension frame focused on the portrayal of the war in Georgia in terms of the Russian-American relationship. The frame related to the lack of dialogue between the East and the West. A Cold War frame re-emerged in the coverage of the three newspapers, and was included within the East-West tension frame. This frame was mostly obvious in the coverage of *The New York Times* (41%), which frequently used words and phrases such as "confrontation," "new Cold War," and "East-West divide." In *The New York Times*, the frame emerged during the first stage of the conflict when military combat was taking place. On August 15, *The New York Times* story stated:

Russia's military offensive into Georgia has jolted the Bush administration's relationship with Moscow, senior officials said Thursday, forcing a wholesale reassessment of American dealings with Russia and jeopardizing talks on everything from halting Iran's nuclear ambitions to reducing strategic arsenals to cooperation on missile defenses. (Myers & Shanker, 2008)

In comparison, the East-West frame was present in 9.5% of the stories in *Izvestia* and 5.8% of the stories in *Resonance*. In Georgian and Russian newspapers most of the paragraphs directly mentioned the Russian-American confrontation. For example, a story published in *Izvestia* on August 11 included the following information:

According to foreign ministry spokesman Grigory Karasin, the West is committed to its nearest past and double standard. The West prevents Russia from its peace-enforcement plan. This raises serious issues regarding its attitude toward our country and will be taken into consideration in the future when we will hold negotiations about the balance of power issues. (“*Russian Foreign Ministry*,” 2008)

The Russian expansionism frame consisted of content about Russia as an expansionist power, which suggested that it wanted to regain its influence in the region, which it had during the Soviet Union period. As Table 1 shows, *The New York Times* used the Russian expansionism frame the most extensively (43% of all of its stories) and, as was expected, *Izvestia* used it the least (2.1% of all of its stories).

*The New York Times* also wrote about the West’s intent to spread its influence and values throughout Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet world. Its news stories and news analyses conveyed information and opinions about NATO, the EU, and other international alliances and organizations that were trying to gain a foothold in the Caucasus region. *The New York Times* also used more of this frame (24% of all of its stories) than did *Izvestia* (1.6%).

Georgia’s territorial integrity frame appeared in the statements made by American and European politicians who called on Russia to respect Georgia’s territorial integrity. Interestingly, *The New York Times* used this frame more (14% of all of its

stories) than *Resonance* (7.3%). However, as shown in Table 1, the percentage of stories in *Resonance* containing Georgia's territorial integrity frame was higher than any of the other frames in the diplomatic set of frames. The territorial integrity frame also encompassed the talks regarding the presence of the Russian military force in Georgian and Russia's recognition of the breakaway republic of South Ossetia. In its September 1 issue *Resonance* quoted NATO's Secretary General as saying: "NATO will never recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. We condemn Russia's decision and call on Russian authorities to change it" (Machaidze, 2008, p. 3).

#### *Human Interest Frame*

The human interest frame focused on individuals, civilians, and soldiers. It emphasized the human angle in the coverage of the war. This frame discussed the chaos that war brought to the civilians in the war zone. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) noted that such a frame refers to "an effort to personalize the news, dramatize or 'emotionalize' the news, in order to capture and retain the audience" (p. 4).

The human interest frames were mostly focused on the portrayal of Georgian civilians. The coverage in *Resonance* and *The New York Times* illustrated the deplorable conditions faced by the internally displaced population. Civilians were depicted by journalists and also interviewed. In the interviews civilians talked about the difficulties they had during combat and told stories of witnessing killings and looting. Some interviewees were openly grieving for a deceased family member and some talked about an uncertain future. The human interest frame particularly emphasized the emotional state of civilians. Feelings of anger, fear, frustration, and pain emanated from the

civilians' words, which were enhanced by graphic images of war. In an interview with *Resonance* on August 10, a displaced person from the South Ossetian conflict zone said:

My family left the village at 1 a.m. We walked all the way here, hiding in basements. For about a week, the people were staying in basements. Mostly it was women and children. Nobody broke into our houses; we were bombed from the military jets. Nobody was there to help. (Eristavi, 2008, p. 4)

The way Georgian civilians were portrayed was similar in *Resonance* and *The New York Times*. Along with Georgian civilians, the South Ossetian civilians' frame also appeared in *Resonance* and *The New York Times*. In the stories in *Resonance*, a very small number of the South Ossetian civilians often showed their disapproval of the Russian and the de facto South Ossetian authorities. In *The New York Times* coverage, the portrayal of the South Ossetian civilians was focused on the suffering of the people or their celebration after Russia recognized the independence of the region.

Unlike the depictions of civilian suffering in *The New York Times* and *Resonance*, *Izvestia's* coverage was not addressed to the people from the war zone. The reporting in *Izvestia* focused on regular civilians in Georgian cities who expressed their reactions to the war. The overall impression that one would get from the coverage was a complete denial of the fact that Georgia was in a state of war.

Within the human interest frame, a small number of Georgian expatriates, Georgian and Russian soldiers' frames were also found. The frame focused on the portrayal of soldiers outside the battlefield, where they interacted with journalists and civilians.

### *Causality Frames*

The set of causality frames was another dominant set which emerged in the coverage by the three newspapers. This set was the third most dominant in the coverage of *Resonance* and *Izvestia*, appearing in 22.2% of the stories in *Resonance* and in 13.8% of the stories in *Izvestia*. The set of causality frames focused on the causes and shortcomings of the war. They were subdivided into prognostic and diagnostic frames.

The prognostic frame included discussion of the political, economic, and military consequences of the war. The three newspapers differed on the issues they addressed. *Resonance* was concerned about the political situation in Georgia, Georgian-Russian relationships, and regional issues. Considerable coverage was devoted to the question of what the response of the West would be to Russia's military action in Georgia. During the war and the negotiation period, the United Nations and the European Commission convened several times to make a decision on how to deal with the military confrontation in Georgia. *Resonance* also wrote about the economic damage that the war inflicted on Georgia's economy. The economic issues covered the country's agricultural, business, communication, ecological, and social sectors. On September 9, an article in *Resonance* speculated about the impact of the war on the banks in Georgian:

The war has inflicted serious damage to Georgia's banking sector. The exact percentage has not yet been determined. The most important thing for now is to live through the crisis, and regain strength for further activities. (Chitaia, 2008, p. 6)

The prognostic frame in *Izvestia* and *The New York Times* was focused on the political consequences of the war in terms of Russian-American relationships. *The New*

*York Times* focused on the broader issues of the relationships that are related to European energy security and the United States' involvement in Eastern Europe. For example, in a news analysis published on August 12, *Izvestia* speculated about the possible political consequences of the war: "Russia and the West won't be able to reach a compromise. This will happen especially if Russia recognizes the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia" (Belauza, 2008).

The diagnostic frame, which dealt with the causes of the conflict, was present in all three publications. *The New York Times* gave more in-depth explanation to the reasons for the conflict than *Resonance* and *Izvestia*. Coverage included in this frame provided a context for the conflict and historical background for the tensions between Georgia and South Ossetia. An article in *The New York Times Week in Review* published on August 10 discussed that history: "The roots of this bitter relationship are deep and tangled, as is practically everything in the archaic world of the Caucasus. Modern Georgian history is a record of submission to superior Russian power" (Traub, 2008).

*Izvestia* wrote about South Ossetia's struggle to become independent from Georgia and its desire to join Russia. *Resonance* wrote about Russia's involvement in the conflict. Neither *Izvestia* nor *Resonance* provided in-depth coverage that provided a historical context for the conflict. Instead, the diagnostic frame for both publications was embedded in more global political issues like the Russian-American and the Georgian-American relationships.

### *Research Question 2*

What sources did *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* use in their coverage of the war in Georgia?

As shown in Table 2, the most quoted sources for *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* were government and military officials of Georgia, Russia, and the United States. Journalists use government officials as sources of stories because they add prestige to a story, are considered to be objective, and are available within the limited time cycle (Noakes & Wilkins, 2002). In *Resonance*, Georgian government and military officials appeared in 33.5% of the stories, followed by Georgian civilians and Georgian intellectuals. In *Izvestia*, Russian officials and military personnel were in 49.2% of the stories, followed by the Georgian officials (18%). Georgian officials dominated the list of the second most quoted sources in *Izvestia*. In *The New York Times* Russian government and military officials were the largest group of sources (62%) followed by Georgian officials (48%).

As shown in Table 2, not all the stories in *Resonance* and *Izvestia* had sources. The total percentage of stories in which sources were used was 89.5% in *Resonance* and 94.1% in *Izvestia*. In contrast, 100% of the stories in *The New York Times* were based on attribution of sources. One of the reasons fewer sources were used in *Resonance* and *Izvestia* was that they ran more stories, which often did not contain attribution.

Table 2

Sources of Attribution in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*

	<i>Resonance</i> (n=275)	<i>Izvestia</i> (n=189)	<i>Times</i> (n=100)
Sources of Attribution	%	%	%
Georgian officials	33.5	18.0	48.0
South Ossetian officials	3.6	9.5	14.0
Russian officials	18.2	49.2	62.0
American officials	8.4	7.4	42.0
European officials	8.4	9.0	25.0
Georgian intellectuals	19.3	—	5.0
Russian intellectuals	1.1	5.3	5.0
Western intellectuals	—	1.1	25.0
Representatives of international organizations (UN, EU)	11.3	9.0	12.0
Georgian civilians	20.4	4.2	24.0
Russian civilians	0.4	2.1	2.0
South Ossetian civilians	2.2	0.5	10.0
Georgian soldiers	3.3	0.5	8.0
Russian soldiers	1.1	0.5	5.0
Official documents/media releases	12.7	14.8	19.0
Other	5.5	3.7	13.0
<b>Total <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>89.5</b>	<b>94.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Note.* Columns total more than 100% because most stories contain more than one frame.



### *Research Question 3*

To what extent, if any, did *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* use episodic and thematic frames?

The coverage of the 2008 war in Georgia in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* was analyzed to determine the extent to which the coverage contained episodic and thematic frames. The following definitions were used from Iyengar and Simon's (1993) study of the first Gulf War. An episodic frame is presented by a news story that primarily provides coverage of a specific event. For the purpose of this study, a frame was categorized as episodic when it focused on a specific aspect of the conflict. For example, on August 17, *Resonance* used an episodic frame when it wrote:

The highways linking western and eastern Georgia are paralyzed. Most of them are blocked by either the Russian military or South Ossetian illegal groupings. The only connector to the east and the west, besides the highways, is the railway that was exploded last night. The explosion took place 40 kilometers away from Tbilisi, near the city of Kaspi. Yesterday, mines were discovered and neutralized several other bridges. (Kobalia, 2008, p. 3)

A second example of an episodic frame is the following paragraph published by *The New York Times* on August 11, 2008:

Under the cease-fire agreement, all troops are to return to their positions before the fighting, and Russian 'peacekeepers' previously stationed in the ethnic enclaves are allowed to patrol in the security zones — but not to set up fixed positions as the Russians have done. Even those patrols are supposed to stop once international monitors are in place. (Enlarger, 2008)

An example of an episodic frame type in *Izvestia* is a paragraph from a story that appeared in the Russian newspaper on August 11, 2008, which provided information on the military action in the conflict zone:

Russia and Georgia are not in a state of war, deputy commander of Russian military forces Anatoly Nogovitsin stated. He said that the peacekeepers are on duty. He further noted that they are not limited in the means of the peacekeeping mission. (Litovkin, 2008)

Thematic frames focused on political debates, consequences of the war, and historical background relying on multiple levels of analysis. For example, a story in the August 23 issue of *The New York Times* suggested:

If Russia's invasion of Georgia ushers in a sustained period of renewed animosity with the West, Washington fears that a newly emboldened but estranged Moscow could use its influence, money, energy resources, United Nations Security Council veto and, yes, its arms industry to undermine American interests around the world. (Baker, 2008)

A story published in *Izvestia* on August 11, 2008 showed its disapproval concerning the West's resistance to recognizing the independence of Georgia's two breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia:

What are the reasons for the double standard? Can separatists be good or bad? The former, like Kosovars, are favored by the West and harm Russian allies. And the latter, like South Ossetians, get assaulted. All the same, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili send Georgian troops to Iraq and plans to join NATO. Considering this, can someone say that the fate of South Ossetians and Abkhazians is not of any concern to the West? (Malinyak, 2008)

In an interview with *Resonance*, a Georgian opposition parliament member stated:

As a rule, a country decides on waging war if it is convinced it will be victorious. However, it is important to know what the costs of such victory would be. . . . It is not news that the Georgian military was not ready for combat. We do not have well-equipped military aviation that can dominate the air space. The government should explain what happened. (Mikiashvili, 2008, p. 16)

Episodic frames dominated the coverage in all three newspapers. The analysis of *The New York Times* coverage showed the highest percentage for both frame types:

episodic frames appeared in 94% of its stories, and thematic frames were used in 62% of its stories. *Izvestia* used episodic frames in 72.5% of its stories, and only 16.4% of its stories had thematic frames. In *Resonance*, episodic frames were present in 75.6% of its total stories, with thematic frames in 22.5% of its stories.

### Statistical Analyses

#### *Research Question 4*

Did the use of episodic and thematic frames differ in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*?

To determine whether there were differences in the use of episodic and thematic types of frames in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* analyses of variance (ANOVA) were calculated. One-way analyses of variance tests (ANOVA) found a statistically significant difference in both cases,  $p < .001$ . Table 3 shows the means for episodic and thematic news frames for *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*, and Table 4 shows the ANOVA analyses for episodic and thematic frame types in the three publications. As shown in Table 3, the mean numbers of episodic and thematic types of frames for both *Resonance* and *The New York Times* were higher than the mean number for frames in *Izvestia*. At the same time, the results showed that the difference was created between *The New York Times* and the two other publications.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Episodic and Thematic Frames in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*

Frames	<i>Resonance</i> ( <i>n</i> =275)		<i>Izvestia</i> ( <i>n</i> =189)		<i>Times</i> ( <i>n</i> =100)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Thematic	1.10	2.833	.49	1.409	3.44	4.862
Episodic	4.21	5.293	1.91	2.070	12.13	7.729

Table 4

Analyses of Variance for Episodic and Thematic Frames in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*

Frame Types	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between Groups				
Thematic	2	296.237	33.832	< .001
Episodic	2	358.953	139.033	< .001

One reason for these differences is simply that the number of frames used in the stories in *The New York Times* was higher than used in *Resonance* or *Izvestia*. Another possible explanation as to why the thematic frame types appeared in *The New York Times* more than in *Izvestia* or *Resonance* could be that both *Resonance* and *Izvestia* mostly wrote about specific, event oriented issues that were taking place during the war. Also, the stories in *Resonance* and *Izvestia* were characterized with a one-dimensional style of writing that focused on one particular event only. In contrast, *The New York Times* offered a more complex approach to the war, combining various topics in the context of the war. As a result the stories in *The New York Times* offered multiple layers of analysis and were of an explanatory nature. For more details regarding the episodic and thematic frame types please refer to the descriptive analysis section above.

#### *Research Question 5*

Did the use of the dominant frames differ across the three newspapers?

To determine whether there were differences in the use of the five dominant frames in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*, five separate analyses of variance (ANOVAS) were calculated. The means for the frames are shown in Table 5, and the results of the ANOVAS are shown in Table 6. As shown in Table 5, the means for all the frames in *The New York Times* were significantly higher than the means for the frames in *Resonance* and *Izvestia*. All frames were found to be statistically significant at  $p < .001$ .

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Dominant Frames in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*

Frames	<i>Resonance</i>		<i>Izvestia</i>		<i>The New York Times</i>	
	(n=275)		(n=189)		(n=100)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
War	2.12	3.562	1.04	1.449	4.83	5.669
Political	.99	2.514	.71	1.302	4.62	4.938
Diplomatic	.33	1.045	.19	.539	2.82	4.01
Human interest	.92	2.568	.12	.562	1.71	4.008
Causality	.95	2.579	.35	1.146	1.59	2.941

Table 6

Analyses of Variance for Dominant Frames in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*

Frames	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	Between Groups			
War	2	474.020	37.706	< .001
Political	2	579.931	72.912	< .001
Diplomatic	2	267.951	74.251	< .001
Human interest	2	87.393	14.182	< .001
Causality	2	52.305	10.031	< .001

*Note.* Analyses are based on all of the 564 stories in the three publications.

The scholarly literature on framing primarily deals with the Western media and is focused on the reporting style and journalistic norms used by Western journalists. The objectivity of stories in *The New York Times* and its detail-oriented reporting resulted in more frames in its news reports. In contrast, the news stories in *Izvestia* were characterized by a value-added journalism style where the writer is directly involved in the narrative and expresses his/her opinion and attitude toward the event. As for *Resonance*, most of the stories reported by Georgian journalists were mere statements of facts, resembling news bulletins more than stories. Consequently, the different reporting style of the Russian and Georgian newspapers could have resulted in differences between them and *The New York Times*.

#### *Research Question 6*

How did the dominant frames used in *Resonance* compare with those used in *Izvestia*?

During the time period between August 8, 2008 and October 8, 2008, *Izvestia* and *Resonance* covered stories that were directly related to the war. Based on previous analyses of variance (Table 6), which showed significant differences in the usage of dominant frames in the three media, independent *t*-tests were calculated for each dominant frame to determine the statistical significance between *Resonance* and *Izvestia*. A total of 464 articles were examined for the comparison. As shown in Table 7, the independent *t*-tests revealed statistical significance in the four dominant frame sets. For the means of the stories in *Resonance* and *Izvestia*, please refer to Table 5.

Table 7

Five Independent *t*-tests for Dominant Frames in *Resonance* and *Izvestia*

Frames	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
War	388.988	4.542	< .001
Political	433.347	1.558	.163
Diplomatic	432.531	2.013	.045
Human interest	311.350	4.994	< .001
Causality	405.332	3.379	.003

*Note.* Analyses are based on all 464 stories in *Resonance* and *Izvestia*.

The significantly smaller number of frames in *Izvestia* corresponds to the theory of media framing according to which a text contains frames that are manifested by the presence or absence of certain key issues. Although this study did not focus on the Russian media-government relationship, the possible explanation as to why these frames were noticeably smaller in number in *Izvestia* could be the publications' dependence on Russian government policy. Despite the changes in Russian media and political systems, censorship and self-censorship are still strongly embedded in the mentality of Russian media-makers (Simons & Strovsky, 2006). These features of the media-government relationship come from strong cultural traditions and have become part of a deep-rooted legacy. In the past, Communist Party officials censored content before it reached



newspapers and television screens (McNair, 1988). Simon and Strovsky (2006) argued that the influence of former Russian President Vladimir Putin on the media has been an illustration of this tendency. Therefore, the Russian media's dependence on its political leadership may have affected the production of the news stories in *Izvestia* and on the number of frames occurring in its coverage.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

#### Discussion

The 2008 war in Georgia was a critical international event that provided an opportunity to examine the news frames that were present in the coverage of the 2008 war in Georgia in *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. The purpose of the study was to identify and compare frames used by the publications. A framing analysis was conducted on a sample of 564 articles from *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*, between August 8, 2008 through October 8, 2008.

A major finding of the study was that the three publications used the same frames in their coverage of the war. The set of war frames was found to be dominant in all three newspapers. In this set, the military frame was the most powerful with its focus on combat, destruction, violence, and troops. In addition to the war frames, four other dominant sets of frames were identified—political, diplomatic, human interest, and causality frames. An important finding of the study was that, although the publications used similar frames, they emphasized different aspects. For example, military technologies and weaponry was the focus of *Izvestia* within the set of war frames; *Resonance* emphasized the violence of war, and *The New York Times*' coverage was more balanced, including both themes.

The set of political frames was the second dominant set in all three publications. This set was dominated by the general political frame, which focused on political issues concerning the conflict. The diplomatic and human interest frames represented the next

two dominant sets in the coverage of *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times*. The diplomatic frames focused on global political issues that emerged during the war in Georgia. As in the case of the war frames, the coverage of the three newspapers differed in the selection of the themes they emphasized and made salient. Within the diplomatic set of frames, *Resonance* had the highest percentage of Georgia's territorial integrity frame, *The New York Times* had the highest percentage of the East-West and Russian expansionism frames, and *Izvestia*, had the highest percentage of the East-West frame.

The human interest frame was almost excluded from the stories in *Izvestia*. The human interest frames in *Resonance* and *The New York Times* showed the personal side of the conflict since they portrayed the civilian perception of the war. The emotional portraits of the individuals strengthened the images of the war. It is worth mentioning that the human interest frame was dominated by the portraits of Georgian civilians in *Resonance* and *The New York Times*. One of the reasons for this could have been the fact that throughout the period under examination it was difficult for journalists—Georgian, Russian and American—to enter the South Ossetian territory that was the main combat zone. The stories in *Resonance* demonstrated that, when necessary, *Resonance* journalists could conduct phone interviews with South Ossetian civilians. However, because of the nature of the conflict, it wasn't easy for a Georgian journalist to talk to South Ossetian civilians.

The set of causality frames was the fifth dominant set. This set provided a broader discussion on the consequences and causes of the war. In the prognostic and diagnostic frames, *Resonance*, *Izvestia*, and *The New York Times* emphasized different

aspects as well. For *Izvestia* and *The New York Times*, Russian-American relationships were important. *Resonance* focused more on Georgian-Russian relationship issues and its accession to NATO and the European Union.

An important finding is that, for each of the five dominant set of frames, there were statistically significant differences among the newspapers. Stories in *The New York Times* contained a significantly higher number of frames than the other two newspapers and stories in *Izvestia* had the lowest number of frames. In addition, there were statistically significant differences in the number of episodic and thematic types of frames present in the three newspapers. *The New York Times* had the highest number of both frames.

One possible explanation for the statistically significant higher number of frames in all five dominant frames categories as well as in the number of episodic and thematic frames in *The New York Times* could be the difference in reporting styles, more specifically the one-dimensionality of the Georgia's *Resonance* and the Russia's *Izvestia*. The stories in *Resonance* and *Izvestia* were mostly focused on one particular subject. In comparison, the complex and explanatory character of the stories in *The New York Times* resulted in a large number of different frames in most of their stories.

#### Contributions to Framing Theory

The findings of this research add to the body of literature on framing, particularly in relation to the presence or absence of particular issues and frames in news coverage (Entman, 1993; Gans, 1979). Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005) wrote that the press shies away from issues that it does not consider newsworthy and which do not

provide the audience with an alternative interpretation of events. This can explain the small number of frames in *Izvestia*. Yoon and Gwangho (2002) wrote that media give preference to particular frames and avoid using some others, especially when they report on a conflict in which national interests are involved. This happens because a large portion of the information about a conflict comes from official sources, whose primary job is to promote the news frame that suits their nations' foreign policy interests (Yoon and Gwangho, 2002). The very small number of human interest frames in *Izvestia* may be seen as the publication's attempt to omit a portrayal of human suffering since Russian troops were in Georgia.

Among the many factors influencing the selection of media frames, journalistic norms and routines and the individual schemas of reporters are important (Reese, 2003). The journalistic practices of the three news organizations can be regarded as another factor that determined the framing practices in the three publications. *Resonance* and *Izvestia* are media undergoing a transition. After the decades of Communist Party control, they are still ideological (McNair, 1993). In the past, the press was subject to censorship by Communist Party officials before the news reached newspapers and television. Despite the changes in Russian media and political systems after the breakup of the Soviet Union, censorship and self-censorship are still strongly embedded in the mentality of Russian media-makers (Simons & Strovsky, 2006). These features of the media-government relationship come from strong cultural traditions and have become part of a deep-rooted legacy. The quality of news reporting is not satisfactory because

most newspapers pay so poorly that journalists must have additional jobs to survive and because so few journalists have had professional training (Press Reference, n.d.).

In addition, *Izvestia's* reporting is characterized by value-added journalism, in which a journalist is the main protagonist of the story, expressing his or her opinion and emotions regarding the event. In most cases, their opinions obviously coincide with the publication and government's point of view. Simon and Strovsky (2006) explained that, under Russia's existing administrative regime, it has been difficult for the press to do independent reporting.

A major contribution of this study to mass communications research is that it provides comparative data on the reporting of the three publications on the 2008 war in Georgia. The foundation for this study was existing framing research on war reporting. This study compared media from the West and the post-Communist world. It is noteworthy that there are only a few studies that compare coverage of news media in countries that have very different political and media systems.

Previous cross-cultural framing studies of recent conflicts have suggested that military frames were the most dominant and that the framing often reflects the government's foreign policy lines (Entman, 1991; Dimitrova et al., 2005; Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006; Yoon and Gwangho, 2002). This study found support for these findings. Kolmer and Semetko (2009) wrote in their comparative study on the Iraq war reporting in American, British, Czech, German, South African, and Al-Jazeera news that there were major lines of cross-national difference in the subtopics emphasized in the media. Similar to these findings, this thesis provided evidence that the

three newspapers provided a different pattern of news coverage. Although the emphasis was on the military and political aspects of the conflict, the themes within the dominant frames differed considerably between *Resonance* and *Izvestia*. This difference was noticeable in *The New York Times* and the two other publications as well.

In a cross-cultural study of TV news coverage of the Iraq war, Kolmer and Semetko (2009) suggested that cross-country comparisons, especially when the media are influenced by national political contexts, raise questions about the credibility and impartiality of media reporting of the war. By narrowly framing the coverage, *Izvestia* and *Resonance* gave their audiences a limited view of the conflict.

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## APPENDIX A: CODEBOOK

## 1. Publication number (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

Each paragraph was sequentially numbered as follows:

- (1) Stories published in *Resonance*
- (2) Stories published in *Izvestia*
- (3) Stories published in *The New York Times*

## 2. Story number (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

Each story was sequentially numbered as follows:

- (1) Stories from *Resonance* were numbered from 1 to n
- (2) Stories from *Izvestia* were numbered from 300 to n
- (3) Stories from *The New York Times* were numbered from 500 to n

## 3. Individual date: Date of publication (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

Month, date, and year the stories were printed will be stated in the following order: 808

## 4. Type of the article (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

- (1) News story
- (2) News analysis
- (3) News brief
- (4) News feature

## 5. Article originator: The source of the article: (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

- (1) Publication staff journalist, stringer, freelancer



- (2) Associated Press/Reuters
- (3) Itar-Tass, Interfax, Rosbalt, Rambler
- (4) Interpressnews, Pirveli, Media News
- (5) Compilation of journalists' stories and news agency
- (6) Other/unknown

6. Article frame type (Scott's pi coefficient = 85%)

- (1) Episodic: Depicts concrete, specific events related to the war
- (2) Thematic: Presents a more general or abstract context, usually taking the form of a backgrounder, providing more analysis and discussion of the issue

7. Sources of attribution

- (1) Georgia's President, cabinet members, ministers, military officials, and opposition politicians (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which Georgia's president or members of their cabinets, opposition politicians, and military officials were quoted in articles as sources of information

- (2) South Ossetian de facto government officials, ministers, and military officials (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which de facto government officials, ministers, and military officials were quoted in articles as sources of information

- (3) Russian President, ministers, policy makers, opposition politicians, and military officials (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which the Russian President, ministers, policy makers, and military officials quoted in articles as sources of information

(4) U.S. President, cabinet members, and military officials

(Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of in which paragraphs the U.S. President, cabinet members, and military officials were quoted in articles as sources of information

(5) EU heads of states, cabinet members, policy makers, and military officials.

(Scott's pi coefficient = 95%)

The number of paragraphs in which EU heads of states, cabinet members, policy makers, and military officials were quoted in articles as sources of information

(6) Georgian intellectuals, academics, and think-tanks

(Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which Georgian intellectuals, academics, and think-tanks were quoted in articles as sources of information

(7) Russian intellectuals, academics, and think-tanks

(Scott's pi coefficient = 100 %)

The number of paragraphs in which Russian intellectuals, academics, and think-tanks were quoted in the articles as sources of information

(8) Western intellectuals, academics, and think-tanks, including American and

European intellectuals (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which U.S. intellectuals, academics, and think-tanks were quoted in the articles as sources of information

(9) Representatives of international organizations—UN, OSCE, EU, and NATO officials (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which representatives of international organizations were quoted in articles as sources of information

(10) Georgian civilians (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which Georgian civilians were quoted in articles as sources of information

(11) Russian civilians (Scott's pi coefficient = 95%)

The number of paragraphs in which Russian civilians were quoted in articles as sources of information

(12) South Ossetian civilians (Scott's pi coefficient = 95%)

The number of paragraphs in which South Ossetian civilians were quoted in articles as sources of information

(13) Georgian soldiers (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which Georgian soldiers were quoted in articles as sources of information

(14) Russian soldiers (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which Russian soldiers were quoted in articles as sources of information

(15) Official press releases, documents, and media reports (Scott's pi coefficient = 98%)

The number of paragraphs in which official press releases, documents, and media were quoted in stories

(16) Other (Scott's pi coefficient = 100%)

The number of paragraphs in which other sources were quoted in stories as sources of information

8. Frames (Scott's pi coefficient = 90%)

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| (1) Military Conflict Frame         | This frame emphasizes military action, and military confrontation, focusing on the troops, combat, description of the weaponry and technological capabilities, and prisoners of war. Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005) found that the military conflict frame was dominant in the coverage of the Iraq war in <i>The New York Times</i> . |
| (2) Violence of War Frame           | This frame emphasizes the destruction caused by the war, including destroyed buildings, injuries, casualties, aftermath of bombings, marauding, and looting. It also addresses the aftermath of the war as the violence exercised by soldiers in the run-up to the conflict.   |
| (3) Self-Defense Frame              | The frame focuses on the Georgian government's military action in South Ossetia as the only means to contain the violence by South Ossetian illegal groupings and/or Russian armed forces.   |
| (4) Legitimization of the war frame | Following the statements by Russian officials and media, this frame emphasizes the legitimate character of the Russian invasion in Georgia as part of the peace-enforcement operation.   |
| (5) Protector Frame                 | This frame focuses on the depiction of Russia as a protector and patron of South Ossetia, defending its rights and encouraging its independence from Georgia.  |

- (6) Aggressor Frame
- This frame focuses on the Georgian government and troops as aggressors who attacked South Ossetia.
- (7) Invader Frame
- This frame focuses on the Russian government and troops as defying the territorial integrity of Georgia and violating international agreements.
- (8) General Political Frame
- The political frame emphasizes the political framework of the conflict rather than the combat: the steps taken for the resolution, negotiation details, and ceasefire agreements. This frame also emphasizes the political climate in Georgia and the tension between Georgia and Russia. This frame includes the quotes and statements by government officials, presidents of Georgia, Russia, the United States, France, and others. It also includes quotes by representatives of the United Nations Security Council, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO, and other international organizations.
- (9) Attribution of Responsibility Frame
- Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) described the frame as “presenting an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual group” (p. 96). In this study, the frame is used in reference to the media or their sources, holding Georgia, South Ossetia, Russia, and the U.S. government responsible for the war.
- (10) Georgia’s Territorial Integrity Frame
- This frame emphasizes the territorial integrity of Georgia, suggesting that South Ossetia has historically belonged to Georgia and is not an independent territorial entity equal to any other de jure nation state in the world.

- (11) Strategic Interest Frame
- This frame, which was proposed by Gamson (1992) in regard to the Israeli–Arab conflict, suggests that the event was viewed not only as a local conflict but also as a global political issue (in that case of U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East, vis-à-vis the former Soviet Union). This meaning of the frame applies to this study. The Georgian–South Ossetian conflict was analyzed within the same framework as the Israeli–Arab conflict, and the United States and Russia were viewed as the sides having strategic interests in the region.
- (12) Expansionism Frame: Russia
- This frame emphasizes Russia’s intention to extend its influence on its neighboring countries. The term expansionism is borrowed from Gamson’s (1992) frame of Israeli expansionism, which the author extracted from his research on the Israeli–Arab conflict. According to Gamson (1992), Israeli expansionism means the desire of the Israeli government to acquire more territory and influence in the region.
- (13) Expansionism Frame: West
- This frame focuses on the West’s intent to extend its influence over Central and Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet countries. This includes the discussions about Georgia’s accession into the EU and NATO.
- (14) East-West Tension Frame
- This frame describes the tension between the East and the West, and between the United States and Russia. The frame encompasses the discussion of geopolitical aspects and balance of power issues.
- (15) Georgia’s President Mikheil Saakashvili
- This frame exclusively focuses on the framing of Mikheil Saakashvili and/or his governance. The emphasis in this frame is on Saakashvili’s biography and education.
- (16) Russia’s Prime Minister Vladimir Putin
- This frame exclusively focuses on the framing of Vladimir Putin and/or his governance. The emphasis in this frame is on the personal face of Putin.

- (17) Russia's President  
Dimitry Medvedev
- This frame exclusively focuses on the framing of Russia's President Dimitry Medvedev and/or his governance.
- (18) France's President  
Nicolas Sarkozy
- This frame exclusively focuses on France's president Nicolas Sarkozy who was the key mediator in the war in Georgia.
- (19) U.S. President  
George W. Bush
- This frame exclusively focuses on the framing of the president of the United States and his response to the war.
- (20) Georgian Civilians
- This frame focuses on the plight of Georgians who were directly or indirectly affected by the war.
- (21) South Ossetian  
Civilians
- This frame focuses on the plight of the South Ossetians who were affected by the war.
- (22) Georgian  
Expatriates
- This frame emphasizes the Georgian expatriate's connection to the conflict.
- (23) Georgian Soldiers
- This frame focuses on Georgian soldiers and their portrayal outside the military setting. The soldiers were described and interviewed in their ordinary lives outside the combat field.
- (24) Russian Soldiers
- This frame focuses on Russian soldiers and their portrayal outside the military setting.
- (25) Diagnostic Frame
- This frame was described by Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005, p. 409) as "giving the detailed and broader discussion of what caused the event." Any detailed discussion of the causes of the war is coded as the diagnostic frame.
- (26) Prognostic Frames
- According to Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005, p. 409), "this frame gives the broader discussion of the possible consequences of the event." The speculations of the media on the political, economic, military, and other consequences of the war and its

aftermath are coded as the prognostic frame. This frame further consists of frames of economic, political and military consequences.

A. Economic  
Consequences  
Frame

This frame, which was proposed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), treats “an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country (p. 96).”

B. Political  
Consequences  
Frame

This frame treats an event or a problem as an effect it had politically on an individual, a group, a region, or a country.

C. Military  
Consequences  
Frame

This frame focuses on the consequences of the war for the Georgian or Russian military.