

Georgia-Abkhazia Conflict: View from Abkhazia

LIANA KVARCHELIA

The Abkhazian-Georgian conflict is clearly ethno-political and the main issues of controversy are the following: The Georgian side claims authority over the territory, which was incorporated into Georgia by Stalin's decree in 1931. The Abkhazians are ethnically distinct from the Georgians, and they have a long history in which they had their own state with defined geographical boundaries, and they have a special claim to their territory and statehood. The outbreak of recent hostilities was preceded by years of tensions over political issues that started to develop along ethnic lines as issues of ethnic identity and the origins of the Abkhazians became the subject of political manipulation. The situation became further complicated by the involvement of other non-Georgian groups of Abkhazia in the conflict, who took the Abkhazian side overwhelmingly after the beginning of the war in 1992.

I do not want to overburden you with too much historical detail, but there are some important issues that need to be mentioned. Situated on the Black Sea coast, fertile and picturesque Abkhazia has been an important Transcaucasian crossroads, and historically has always been a dainty dish for conquerors. Abkhazian statehood has existed for over 1,200 years, and Abkhazians have had to defend themselves against invaders on more than one occasion.

For centuries, Georgians and Abkhazians, peoples with very different ethnic origins and languages, lived in neighboring territories. There were periods in their history when Abkhazia, as a separate principality, was under Georgian or Ottoman vassalage. There was also a period when the western and some eastern areas of Georgia were part of the Abkhazian Kingdom.

However, the Russian conquest of the Caucasus brought both countries under the rule of the Russian empire. Thousands of Abkhazians, along with many other peoples of the North Caucasus, were forced to seek refuge in Turkey. Today their descendants (the makhajirs) are scattered all over the world. In Turkey alone, the number of ethnic Abkhazians exceeds 400,000 people. Their lands and homes in

Liana Kvarchelia is the coordinator for the Center for Humanitarian Programs, a non-governmental and nonprofit organization working in Abkhazia.

Abkhazia were taken over by competing Georgians, Armenians, and Russians. In 1887, a famous Georgian public figure, Jacob Gogebashvili, wrote in one of his articles that Abkhazia would never have her sons back, and therefore, it was time to begin thinking about which people were best fit for the climactic conditions of Abkhazia. In Gogebashvili's opinion, Mingrelians (a West Georgian tribe) were the first and the most suitable candidates to colonize Abkhazia.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a resettling process began in Abkhazia that continued throughout the reign of Soviet power. According to the population census, the Georgian portion in the total population of Abkhazia was 6.0 percent in 1886, 24.4 percent in 1897, and 31.8 percent by 1926.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Abkhazia joined the Republic of Mountain Peoples, thus becoming part of a union of North Caucasian republics. However, it was soon annexed by the Georgian Democratic Republic. When the Bolsheviks came to power in Georgia in 1921, Abkhazia was proclaimed a sovereign republic.

Until 1931, Abkhazia was a full union republic within the USSR, and it had a special treaty-based relationship with Georgia. Under Stalin's dictate in 1931, and over the strong protests of Abkhazians, the union republic was demoted to a mere "autonomous republic" to be incorporated into Georgia. This fact alone is the reason why, sixty years later, the Georgians declare that Abkhazia is an inseparable part of Georgia.

The change in the status of Abkhazia, and the period that followed it, are historically remembered by Abkhazians as the policy of "Georgianization" and persecution. At that time, Abkhazian schools were closed and replaced by Georgian ones. Abkhazians could not speak the Abkhazian language. Similarly, Abkhazian geographic names were replaced with Georgian ones. The Stalin era was also a period when a new "theory" was invented by Georgian historians suggesting that Abkhazians were "newcomers" on Georgian land. On the whole, in the Abkhazian view, this period is one characterized by serious attempts to eliminate the identity of the Abkhazian people.

The years of 1937 to 1953 drastically changed the demographic situation in Abkhazia. A special office was set up by Stalin's henchman, Lavrenty Beria, to resettle new numbers of Georgians in Abkhazia. As a result, by 1959 the number of Georgians in Abkhazia had already increased, reaching 39.1 percent of the total population. In later years, on the pretext of bringing the necessary manpower and intellectuals in for industry and educational institutions, more Georgians were brought to Abkhazia to make up 45 percent of the total population by the year 1989.

In the decades that followed Stalin's death, Abkhazian schools were reopened, and the Abkhaz language was again used in publishing and broadcasting; but the policy of "Georgianization" continued in a more covert manner. Abkhazians were responding by mass protests that occurred almost every decade.

Georgian politicians often argue that Abkhazia had a more privileged position within Georgia than any other autonomous republic had within the Russian federation. To substantiate the idea, they claimed that Abkhazians, whose number by 1978 had already decreased to 17 percent of the population, had a disproportional

tionately large share of government posts. They, however, overlook the fact that all top officials in Abkhazia were appointed by Tbilisi and, even then, only after at least three years of good service in the capital of Georgia. The Tbilisi authorities made sure that the most important posts such as, for instance, Communist Party first secretary, were given to “loyal” Abkhazians. Such instrumental positions as finance minister, or interior minister, or KGB head, were traditionally taken by Georgians, most often imported from Tbilisi.

In the years of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, Georgian nationalism reached its extreme form. The idea whereby the Georgians are the “hosts” and other ethnic groups are the “guests” (often “ungrateful” because they had no right to self-determination on the territory that historically “belonged” to Georgians) was propagated through the media and academic publications. One of the central Georgian newspapers, for example, went as far as publishing an article that suggested that restrictions be put on non-Georgian families to have no more than two children, because the birth rate among Georgians was allegedly the lowest at that time. The slogan “Abkhazia is Georgia” was surpassed in popularity only by the slogan “Georgia for Georgians.” Frequently, at mass rallies, fighters for Georgia’s independence demanded the abolition of Abkhazia’s and South Ossetia’s autonomous status. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who was soon to become the president of Georgia, disseminated an address to the West Georgians that, in essence, was a plan to assimilate or oust Abkhazians from their land. Gamsakhurdia’s ideas found little criticism, if any, in the Georgian community. On the contrary, the image of the “enemy” was a strong uniting factor for the Georgian society, which was torn by internal political struggle. The clashes in 1989 following the separation of the Georgian sector from the Abkhazian university brought the antagonism between Abkhazians and Georgians to a new level.

The assertive Georgian nationalism was echoed by national movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which, in the face of growing Georgian aggressiveness, felt extremely insecure. The Abkhazian people repeatedly demanded the restoration of union republic status for Abkhazia, or even the joining of Abkhazia to the Russian federation. The war in South Ossetia, started by President Gamsakhurdia, as well as tensions in the Armenian and Azeri districts of Georgia, the unsuccessful bid of the Meskhetian Turks (deported from Georgia in 1944) to return to their historic homeland, and the migration of several thousand of Lezgins from Georgia, further aggravated the situation in the region. However, to avoid a new confrontation with Abkhazia when the South Ossetian conflict was at its peak, Gamsakhurdia proposed a parliament in Abkhazia that would grant twenty-eight seats to Abkhazians against twenty-six Georgian seats. The new Abkhazian parliament was virtually split into Georgian and non-Georgian factions. The Georgian parliamentary minority sabotaged the resolutions and acts passed by the parliament of Abkhazia, while the rest of the parliament adopted resolutions that would safeguard Abkhazia’s sovereignty.

The unilateral abrogation by the Georgian parliament in Tbilisi of all legal instruments, including the union treaty of 1922 and the restoration of the Georgian Constitution of 1921 when Abkhazia was annexed by Georgia, forced the

Abkhazian parliament to reinstate temporarily the Abkhazian Constitution of 1925, when Abkhazia, as a union republic, had a treaty-based relationship with Georgia. The Georgian faction, which at that time already had internal divisions over the ousted President Gamsakhurdia, was, however, unanimous in boycotting the resolution. During the discussion of the right of peoples (including Abkhazians) to self-determination as one of the most basic human rights, a Georgian MP publicly stated that the rights of Georgians should be granted priority over the human rights of other groups.

The breakup of the Soviet Union triggered further tensions in the newly emerged states. Hasty recognition of the privileged fifteen new states by the world community, on a selective basis, disregarded the fact that many of these states were composed of other entities, such as autonomous republics, regions, and so forth. Their status, as well as that of the former union republics, had been arbitrarily established or changed by Stalin. When Georgia became a member of the UN, the state power in the country was in the hands of the council that had seized it in a bloody coup that overthrew President Gamsakhurdia. Twenty days after Georgia's formal recognition by the UN, the Georgian troops attacked Abkhazia. New elections in Georgia were held amidst the war in Abkhazia. Neither South Ossetia nor Abkhazia, except for the Georgian controlled districts where non-Georgians were forced to vote at gun-point, participated in the election. Some areas in Mingrelia did not take part in the voting either.

Economically weak, polyethnic in composition, guided by ideas of building a unitary state, unwilling to accept ideas of federalism despite declarations of adherence to democratic principles, Georgia was a perfect example of what Andrei Sakharov called a mini-empire. Paying tribute to Sakharov's services, the Georgians never forgave him, however, for calling Georgia a mini-empire. The right of the Georgian people to self-determination, which was finally realized through the collapse of the Soviet Union, was generally viewed as only the Georgian prerogative.

The Abkhazians were extremely concerned by the developments in Tbilisi, and fearing a genuine threat to their statehood, they proposed to the Georgians to discuss a possible federative treaty to fill in the "legal vacuum" that had existed between the two entities since all Soviet agreements and acts were abrogated. The proposal was rejected by Tbilisi mainly on the grounds that Georgian society was not ready to accept any ideas of a federation. On 14 August 1992, on the very day when the Abkhazian parliament assembled to discuss the draft treaty, the Georgian armed forces attacked Abkhazia. The parliament building was one of the targets.

Fierce fighting continued until 30 September 1993, when the Georgian troops were ousted from the territory of Abkhazia. In the face of the advancing Abkhazian forces, large numbers of local Georgians, many of whom picked up arms and joined the Tbilisi forces, fled Abkhazia fearing reprisals for killings and atrocities perpetrated against Abkhazians, local Armenians, Russians, and Greeks. A UN fact-finding mission that visited Abkhazia at the request of the Georgian side, blamed the Abkhazians for alleged ethnic cleansing. The mission, however, established that both sides, initially the Georgian and then the Abkhazian, were involved in human rights abuse and atrocities.

Throughout the three years of negotiations that have followed the defeat in Abkhazia, Georgia's leadership has been trying (not without success) to get the world community to pressure Abkhazia to accept a political settlement on Georgia's terms. Yet, even Abkhazia's consent to form a union with Georgia within Georgia's internationally recognized boundaries does not satisfy its aspirations. By trying to play a balancing act between Russia and the West, Georgians leaders have now managed to get both to take a hard-line position on Abkhazia.

From the very beginning of the conflict, the official Western position on Abkhazia has been unambiguous in its double standard. At the time when the unexpected attack of the Georgian State Council troops was launched on Abkhazian

“From the very beginning of the conflict, the official Western position on Abkhazia has been unambiguous in its double standard.”

towns and villages, the Western countries, blind and deaf to the numerous pleas and appeals of Abkhazians, declared that the conflict was an internal affair of Georgia, and that the Georgian government (the Provisional State Council) was the only

legitimate power, able to restore law and order and to safeguard the railway lines in Abkhazia. Ironically, this and other official pretexts for the introduction of Georgian troops were later refuted by Eduard Shevardnadze himself in one of his television interviews. He actually put the blame for unleashing the war on his warlords, Kitovani and Ioseliani. The same blind eyes and deaf ears were until recently turned by the Western officials to the Russian crusade in Chechnya. Though in the case of Chechnya, at least human rights were made an issue, and that, too, happened only because of numerous statements and exposures by Russia's human rights advocates and through the considerable efforts of the Russian and international media.

During the first months of the Georgian occupation of Abkhazia, serious human rights violations were perpetrated on an ethnic basis. Hundreds of Abkhazians and those who fell under suspicion for being pro-Abkhazian were tortured and executed. Practically the whole Abkhazian population and a large number of non-Georgians were ousted from the occupied territories. The Abkhazian State Archives and the Institute of History, Language and Literature, with irreplaceable documents and manuscripts, were intentionally burnt to ashes—a fact that Abkhazians describe as an evil symbol of Georgia's desire to eliminate the very identity of the Abkhaz people.

The Abkhazian government at that time unsuccessfully tried to bring the attention of the world community to the fact that the Abkhaz people were on the verge of annihilation by Georgia's aggression. The public threat, made on television, of the Georgian commander-in-chief, Kharakashvili, to eliminate the entire Abkhaz nation even if it took a sacrifice of 100,000 Georgian soldiers, did not evoke the slightest criticism of any international organization or government (with the exception of UNPO). On the contrary, soon afterward, Eduard Shevardnadze promoted Kharakashvili to the post of defense minister and gave him the rank of general.

It was not until the Abkhaz forces retook the northwestern part of Abkhazia,

reaching the Russian border, that the West made up its mind that it was time to take a more active stand in the conflict and probably to intercept the initiative in brokering a peace agreement that would unconditionally respect Georgia's territorial integrity. The overall military victory of Abkhazian forces in late September 1993 pushed the UN to take more resolute steps not to allow Russia to have control over the situation.

Russia, in turn, used the situation to make Georgia pliable in securing Russia's interests in the region. Obviously, it was not in the interest of Russia to have an independent Abkhazia as a precedent for its own subjects. Equally, it was not in Russia's interest to have on its southern border a strong, independent, disloyal Georgia, with South Ossetia and Abkhazia safely back, and to be left without instruments to exert pressure. The loss of Abkhazia forced Georgia to join the CIS, and today it continues bargaining with Russia over her military bases—Abkhazia again being a pawn.

It can hardly be argued that Russia's moves are dictated by a desire to preserve its influence and presence in the regions of her strategic interests. However, to say that the tensions between Abkhazia and Georgia are only a result of Russian manipulation is to admit only half of the truth. To control the situation, you have to have something to use to do the manipulating. And in this regard, Georgia's ultranationalism and its push for hegemony, as well as the responsive self-determination movement in Abkhazia, were perfect trump cards.

Russia's role in the conflict has been made a special issue by many analysts and the media, also, from the point of view of the degree of her military involvement in the conflict. Georgia was the first to insist that Abkhazians owe their victory entirely to Russia's direct military support. It is not easy for Georgia to acknowledge its military defeat in Abkhazia, much as it is hard for Russia to do the same with regard to Chechnya. One thing is clear, however—that both Georgians and Abkhazians (and the Chechens, for that matter) got their armaments from the same source. In one of his regular radio addresses, President Shevardnadze claimed that thousands of Russian citizens took part in the war on the Abkhaz side, and it was their assistance that "enabled full occupation of that part of Georgia." However, the bulk of the Abkhazian forces consisted of Abkhazians, local non-Georgians, and even Georgians—the rest being volunteers from the North Caucasian republics and Cossacks. North Caucasians are ethnically related to the Abkhazians, and they have been strongly supporting Abkhazia since the tensions and clashes erupted in 1989. The Cossacks, in their turn, were concerned with the fate of the Russians that made up 15 percent of the pre-war population in Abkhazia. However, it is sufficient to look through the lists of casualties to be able to judge who was actually resisting the Georgian assault.

The Western media and public has paid tribute to the Chechens, whose spirit has not been crushed by the Russian army, something that Abkhazians have been denied by the West. Serious concern has been expressed over Russia's policy in Chechnya. Abkhazians heard hardly a word of sympathy when they were forced to fight for their very survival, because they evidently had the "wrong" rival.

The recent developments in Chechnya have added a new dimension to the Georgian-Abkhazian peace process. Georgia is trying to avoid, wherever possible, any comparison between Chechnya and Abkhazia, which is quite understandable. The Georgian president was the first to give public support to President Yeltsin at the time of Russia's attack on Chechnya in December 1994, and called for joint efforts in suppressing any manifestations of "aggressive separatism" at any cost. Later, after the signing of the Khasavyurt peace accords, Eduard Shevardnadze stated that the Abkhazian and Chechen conflicts differed, and, therefore, ways for their settlement should be different. Despite many similarities, however, there is indeed one important difference between the two situations: the Chechens had Russia fighting against them, while the Abkhazians had to confront Mr. Shevardnadze and his worldwide prestige as a champion of democracy and peace.

Apparently, the recent agreement between Russia and Chechnya has put Georgia in an uncomfortable position, since now Chechnya could create an undesirable precedent (from Georgia's point of view) for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, it is also possible that, depending on the outcome of the political struggle within the Kremlin, Abkhazia may become, or may be forced to become, a precedent for the resolution of the Chechen conflict.

So far, Russia's economic and political sanctions against Abkhazia, including the closing of its borders with Abkhazia and the cutting off of communications lines, as well as considerable pressure from the "Friends of Georgia" (a group of leading Western countries), have forced the Abkhazian side, after three years of *de facto* independence, to agree to concessions to Georgia. The Abkhazians are ready to sign an agreement whereby Georgia and Abkhazia are uniting in a federative union. Still, Abkhazians demand that the relationship between the two entities should be based on an equal footing. They are prepared to delegate part of their responsibilities to a common body of jurisdiction and to insist that the political status of Abkhazia is not subject to negotiation. Only the people of Abkhazia have the right to determine their future. From the Abkhazian point of view, negotiations with Georgia should be focused on reestablishing relations between the two republics. Georgia, in its turn, is insisting on an arrangement that would enable it to preserve its role as a center that relates to a province, to which Georgia is prepared to delegate certain responsibilities. However, Georgia's promises to grant Abkhazia the broadest autonomous rights are not convincing for Abkhazians after what they have experienced. They will not accept such an arrangement, because it does not guarantee the security of their statehood. Georgia, on the other hand, is not capable of forcing its will on Abkhazia without outside help. Therefore, there has been a lot of maneuvering on the part of Georgia to get the third party to do the job.

One of the instruments Georgia is using to put pressure on the Abkhazian side is the issue of Georgian refugees. To ensure their prompt return, *en masse*, the Georgian side has insisted on entrusting the peacekeepers with police functions. However, that would mean that Russian forces will be directly involved in the confrontation because the return of refugees prior to a political settlement will inevitably trigger new clashes.

The last Security Council resolution (for those who are familiar with UN documents, it is easy to note the difference between the more balanced reports of the UN secretary general, based on the materials of the observer mission and his special envoy, and the Security Council resolutions) strongly supported the Georgian demand to bring the refugees back to Abkhazia and insisted that it was inadmissible to link the refugee problem with the issue of Abkhazia's political status—that is, with the problem that actually constitutes the core of the conflict. In several interviews, Mr. Shevardnadze practically acknowledged that sending troops to Abkhazia was a grave mistake, for which Kitovani was responsible. Georgian refugees from Abkhazia are paying a heavy price for that mistake. The mistake will be repeated if they are forced to come back to Abkhazia prior to a political settlement. Around 50,000 to 60,000 of them have spontaneously returned to the Gal region of Abkhazia, which is predominantly Mingrelian. A return of refugees to other areas with mixed populations will only increase the confrontation. The non-Georgian population will see them as a fifth column, manipulated by Tbilisi as before.

In recent months, the Georgian leaders have more than once announced a move for policy change. Along with threats to suspend the Russian peacekeepers' mandate, warnings have been made about the possibility of reviewing Georgia's military agreements with Russia, and even about seceding from the CIS if Russia does not help to settle Georgia's conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia on Georgian terms. The above declarations were followed by a recent statement that the fate of Russia's military bases in Georgia depends on the way the Abkhazian conflict is going to be resolved. Not relying on Western assistance (which, though not entirely token, failed to provide security guarantees for Georgia so far), Georgia again appreciated Russia's geopolitical role in the region as the chief bargainer and is actually offering its independence in exchange for her former autonomous regions. Mr. Shevardnadze's prophetic words, that for Georgia the sun rises in the North, may after all come true.

Trying to "restore" Georgia's territorial integrity by greenlighting Russia's military bases is not going to solve Georgia's problems. Russia is aware of the fact that Georgia's loyalty will be only temporary and have predictable limits. On the other hand, coercive actions against Abkhazia will undermine any attempts for reconciliation. Abkhazia and South Ossetia have no grounds to believe that Georgia is building a democratic state and that they should seek the accommodation of their own rights within it. They are unlikely to support any kind of association with Georgia without genuine guarantees for their security. Any attempt to force Abkhazia into a pre-conflict arrangement with Georgia would not be viable. In essence, it would mean restoring the Soviet legacy, and this would have the potential to become a bomb that will explode at any time in the future.

As for the Western position, it seems that the oil pipeline interests, on the one hand, and the suspension of NATO's enlargement, on the other, contribute to the ambivalence over the West's possible role in the post-Soviet space. In the case of Georgia, an additional factor opposing Russia's influence is the support for Eduard Shevardnadze, who is seen as the key player in ending the cold war. How-

ever, the unconditional support of the Friends of Georgia for Georgia's claims will only draw Russia and Abkhazia together. It seems that the level of Georgia's independence depends on the level of Abkhazia's sovereignty. Any solution to the problem that is recognized by the international community will contribute to long-term regional security and peace only if it does not fail to consider the claims of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechnya, or Nagorno-Karabakh.

I would like for you to examine the results of some sociological studies undertaken in Abkhazia and Georgia. The results of surveys conducted in Abkhazia in 1994 by a non-governmental organization called "Civic Initiative" showed that 45.5 percent of 10,026 respondents (67.3 percent of Abkhazian respondents, 21.3 percent of the Russians, 35.9 percent of the Armenians, 13.5 percent of the Georgians, 21.0 percent of the Georgian returnees to the Gal region, and 75 percent of the experts) wanted Abkhazia to be an independent state. Another 45.5 percent favored uniting with the Russian federation (27 percent of Abkhazians, 68.7 percent of the Russians, 58.1 percent of the Armenians, 29.7 percent of the Georgians, 9 percent of Georgian returnees in Gal, and 15 percent of the experts). This survey was conducted before the attack of the Russian federation troops on Chechnya, therefore, I would expect that the attitude of the population toward a union with Russia could have considerably changed. Russia's sanctions against Abkhazia that followed the Chechen war are another factor that could account for a possible change of attitude. The idea of a union state with Georgia on an equal basis found the support of 6.7 percent of respondents (3.8 percent of Abkhazians, 8.6 percent of Russians, 4.3 percent of Armenians, 37.8 percent of Georgians, 32 percent of returnees, and 10 percent of experts). Abkhazia's becoming part of Georgia found support among 0.6 percent of the respondents (the only significant numbers being 8.1 percent of Georgians and 36 percent of the returnees, with 0 percent of Abkhazians supporting this).

A survey among the Georgian refugees conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council shows that 74 percent of the respondents consider bringing Abkhazia back under Georgia's jurisdiction as the main precondition for their return to Abkhazia. This means that, first, they do not think that Abkhazia is under Georgia's jurisdiction, and second, that they do not consider themselves citizens of Abkhazia.

Another survey carried out by the Moscow Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology established that 44.2 percent of Georgian and 32 percent of non-Georgian respondents in Tbilisi would like to see Abkhazia as a constituent part of Georgia without the right of secession, while 28.8 percent of Georgians and 39.5 percent of non-Georgians found it hard to answer the question on the status of Abkhazia. Forty-two percent of ethnic Georgians think that Abkhazia and South Ossetia belong to Georgia, but that keeping them by force is not worth the sacrifice. Forty-four percent think that it is worth it. Only 6.7 percent of Georgians supported the idea of making Abkhazia a free economic zone.

It is evident that the bloodshed has divided the two nations to the extent that there is total mistrust for each other, which is further stirred up by massive propaganda. Georgians view Abkhazians as secessionists and "aggressive separatists" (the term introduced by Mr. Shevardnadze into the political vocabulary),

while Abkhazians see Georgians as aggressive nationalists, an imperial force that has ungrounded claims on their land, as a party that bears the blame for unleashing the bloody war on the population, as well as the party that is behind the economic and political sanctions on Abkhazia.

The reconciliation of the two nations will come along with the political reconciliation. In this regard, the world community can and has to play a constructive role. Labeling peoples as secessionists, separatists, and rebels with a negative meaning, as well as imposing solutions, will hardly persuade these peoples to give up their aspirations and rights. It is necessary to recognize that current international legislation is not in many cases equipped to deal with the new realities. Even within the existing laws, it is possible to find ways of accommodating the two rival principles of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination. In the case of Abkhazia, an alternative to total independence from Georgia could be a confederation, the status of a protected state, and so forth, with access to international organizations.

The two current tendencies, self-determination movements to establish new states and an integration process among older states (which has problems of its own), are not in the long run contradicting each other. The new states-to-be are seeking independence not because they want to isolate themselves from the rest of the world, but because they want to be integrated into the world community directly and equally, not through other entities that misrepresent them and, moreover, use membership in international institutions to suppress their demands. The question is whether the world community should try to build security by looking into the sources of self-determination movements in each particular case and by working out mechanisms to accommodate the rights of peoples to decide their destiny, or take coercive measures in most cases to protect vested interests under the banner of regional or even global security.