



**The Impact of the August Events (2008) on the World:
Analysis in Chinese Scholarly Literature**

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify and examine the evaluation and analysis of the global impact of the Russia–Georgia war, including its influence on China, as reflected in Chinese academic literature. This analysis will help clarify the prevailing trends, perceptions, levels of awareness, and the degree of scholarly engagement within the Chinese academic community during that period.

Typically, academic circles initiate research and share results that may later influence national policies, including foreign policy, thus underscoring the broader significance of this research.

This paper also explores the relevance of the August 2008 events to Chinese academia and investigates the reasons behind the scholarly interest in the topic. Furthermore, the study assesses China's pers-

pective on Georgia's geographical position and its geostrategic significance.

Keywords: War; Russia; Georgia; China; World.

Introduction

The purpose of the present study is to examine how the August 2008 Russia–Georgia war (hereafter also referred to as the “August Events”) and its global impact, including its influence on China, are perceived from the Chinese perspective. To achieve this goal, the following objectives have been set:

- To analyze the representation of the August War and the evaluation of related events and circumstances in Chinese academic literature.
- To assess analyses concerning Russia's reputation and the potential threats posed by Russia as perceived in the aftermath of the war.
- To identify scholars' evaluations of the war's consequences and the new realities faced by the world, including China.
- To determine how Georgia's geographical location and its geostrategic value are perceived from a Chinese viewpoint.

It should be noted that the number of studies dedicated to the August War is relatively limited. The literature referenced in this study includes works by authors whose research is closely related to the topic under investigation. These works are published in Chinese academic journals and collected volumes. Chronologically, the research mainly covers studies conducted prior to the war (starting from 2006), the immediate post-war period (up to 2009), and a few later publications.

As Ronald D. Asmus states in his book *A Little War That Shook the World*, there is a scarcity of literature available to Western readers concerning the context of the August 2008 Russia–Georgia war. How-

ever, the present study specifically focuses on Chinese academic literature, which constitutes the primary foundation of the research.

This paper does not examine China's official governmental stance but rather relies exclusively on scientific literature of a research-analytical nature. Through critical discussion, the study evaluates and reflects on the findings of the research. Relevant academic publications were collected, predominantly those published shortly before and after the war. On this basis, knowledge on the topic was synthesized, and differing perspectives were considered, evaluated, and analyzed, particularly through the lens of Chinese-language sources.

Regarding the relevance of the topic, it should be emphasized that issues related to contemporary history are inherently significant, given their close connection to current realities. The relevance of this study is further heightened by the necessity to deepen international relations and to enhance awareness about the respective countries involved. The events and processes discussed in this paper are part of a broader historical narrative.

By examining the academic literature, this study reveals how the war and related events are perceived within China, highlights the global influence of Russia's actions—including their impact on China and on international relations more broadly—and presents Chinese scholars' views regarding the perceived threats posed by Russia, its behavior, and its relations with the West.

Methodology

The present research is based on the following methodological approaches: analysis of cause-and-effect relationships, synthesis, and comparison. It also involves the collection and critical examination of scientific and analytical publications related to the 2008 war. The study establishes the link between scholarly discussions and actual developments, explores elements of Chinese foreign policy as observed by scholars, and examines the perspectives and approaches adopted within Chinese academic discourse.

Results

The works of Chinese scholars provided valuable insights into the analysis of the global impact of the August 2008 events. They also offered perspectives on China's foreign policy dilemmas in the aftermath of the August events and highlighted new prospects for international cooperation. The 2008 war demonstrated that Russia was willing to take radical actions, prompting other countries to reconsider alternative strategies and reassess their foreign policies. Scholarly literature emphasizes that China should pursue a cautious and pragmatic course in its foreign policy.

The findings of this research are significant not only from an academic standpoint but also in terms of raising public awareness about the importance of foreign policy. Moreover, the study will be of interest to individuals engaged in the study of Georgian history and foreign policy more broadly.

Discussion

The following picture emerges regarding China's foreign policy: since the 1990s, China has been actively working to build strategic relations with countries around the world—relations that were not intended to be directed against any third country. This marked a new shift in China's diplomatic approach.

In academic literature, a similar picture is drawn: the 2008 Russia–Georgia war was the first overt and full-scale conflict between CIS countries, and the first direct confrontation between the United States and Russia since the end of the Cold War. Russia asserted control over South Ossetia, while Georgia's pro-Western leaders and NATO declared their support for Georgia. Russian forces occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia and began bombing Georgian territory. This war had far-reaching consequences: it deepened internal divisions within the CIS, worsened Russia–Ukraine relations, increased distrust toward Russia, and, overall, hindered China's efforts to promote mutually bene-

ficial cooperation based on the principle of respect for sovereignty and peaceful development, thereby reducing development opportunities.

Later scholarly analyses noted that, unlike the conflict in Ukraine, the Russia–Georgia war, though lasting only five days, had a profound and lasting impact, shaping the global landscape and being evaluated as the “birth of a new geopolitics” (Wang Lijiu, 2008).

At that time, Georgia had effectively joined the ranks of NATO’s eastward expansion and occupied a critical position for containing Russia. Prior to the war, Georgia had closed all Russian military bases on its territory. Russia reportedly considered launching “special military operations” against Georgia on several occasions, but massive pressure from NATO forced it to postpone such plans (Ji Zhiye, 2008).

The impact of the August events on Georgia and Russia:

The August events delayed Georgia’s accession process to the European Union and NATO, as so-called “internal ethnic” and territorial conflicts remained to be resolved peacefully. Georgia withdrew from the CIS due to the organization’s inaction in resolving member countries’ issues and Russia’s dominant influence over the bloc and severed diplomatic ties with Russia. Economically, the war inflicted serious damage on Georgia, pushing it into a stage of rehabilitation. Russia continued to pursue a policy of pressure against Georgia in almost all spheres.

The August war also influenced the subsequent Russia–Georgia–NATO relations, as well as Russia’s relations with Europe and the United States. By launching the 2008 war in Georgia, Russia effectively initiated a new Cold War. Russia’s so-called “pragmatic policy” presented new global challenges, affecting the entire international community, including China. Trust in Russia declined sharply, leading many countries, especially in the West, to reassess their policies toward Russia. Foreign investments fled Russia at lightning speed, and the

ruble sharply depreciated, causing a major economic crisis (Feng Xinkai, 2008).

The Influence of the August Events on Other Post-Soviet Countries: Georgia's Withdrawal from the CIS. The August events had a significant impact on other post-Soviet nations. Georgia initiated its withdrawal from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). On August 26th, Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, leading Georgia to sever diplomatic relations with Russia. The escalation of the Russo-Georgian conflict not only deepened disagreements within the CIS but also ultimately undermined Russia's attempts to integrate the CIS market. It became clear to CIS member states that Russia was attempting to rehabilitate its former glory and that this military threat was not limited to Russia and Georgia alone.

Chinese academic circles note that following the escalation of the conflict between Russia and Georgia in July 2008, Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko openly supported the Georgian President and actively pursued NATO membership. This step also accelerated the deterioration of Russo-Ukrainian relations, with Russia immediately adopting a direct confrontational stance against Ukraine. In the Black Sea region, Ukraine and NATO began joint military exercises, which provoked strong opposition from ethnic Russians in Ukraine and led to frequent criticism of Yushchenko. Ultimately, this environment contributed to the election of Viktor Yanukovych in 2010 and, consequently, the legal prohibition of Ukraine's accession to NATO. This move, in turn, triggered outrage among the pro-Western population and confrontations with Russians, culminating in the 2014 revolution in Ukraine.

The August events, alongside the situation in Georgia, exposed the CIS's ineffectiveness. Georgia received no substantial assistance from other CIS countries due to their fear of Russia and perceived threats, revealing the unequal rights and status among the supposedly "equal" member states. Following the erosion of Russia's influence

within the CIS due to its actions, member states began to work on issues and seek solutions individually and independently (Tan Defeng, 2009).

The August Events and the West. Chinese academic sources suggest that the war seemingly revealed a divergence between NATO and the European Union. Following the Russo-Georgian War, Europe considered that "the war was ended not by the United States or NATO, but by French President Sarkozy." Sarkozy gained significant political popularity in this conflict, consequently elevating the political status of France and the European Union in general.

Scholars note in their work that Russia's aim in this war was to halt considerations of NATO's eastward expansion and interest in the Black Sea region. In their view, NATO's influence significantly decreased, forcing the United States to reduce its control over Europe. Under the leadership of Germany and France, the European Union began to strengthen its voice on the international stage, gradually becoming a de facto "fourth pole" in global politics. To counter this, the United States was compelled to take certain extraordinary measures, such as advocating for Britain's exit from the European Union and engaging in trade disputes with France.

The 2008 war not only cooled Russo-European relations but also shifted them entirely towards an inevitable and gradual confrontation. Although trade between them increased even after the Russo-Georgian War, this growth was driven by objective necessity. However, on a psychological and ideological level, Europe could no longer accept Russia.

These processes also led to considerations of adopting alternative energy routes to break free from energy dependence on Russia.

The Russo-Georgian War deepened the European Union's distrust of Russia. Europe is observing how far Russia will go and how relations between the US and Russia will develop. However, NATO's

retreat after the war actually eased tensions in Russo-European Union relations.

Regarding specific countries, scholarly literature indicates that Poland and the Baltic states accuse Russia of provoking the war and attempting to justify itself and win over Europe.

Europe, on the one hand, asks Russia to withdraw its troops from Georgia in a way that allows Russia to "save face," but on the other hand, it acts out of economic interests and begins negotiations with Russia on various issues. In doing so, the European Union's actions once again demonstrate the connection and influence between economics and politics, scholars write, with energy dependence forcing it to act in accordance with economic interests.

NATO expresses support for Georgia, further distancing itself from Russia and hindering their cooperation in various areas, although it does not completely cease.

Regarding Europe, it is also written that, in their view, if Georgia is conceded to Russia, Europe will have to satisfy Russia's "imperialist greed" and realizes that in 15 years, Russia will try to expand again. England even proposed forming a united alliance to resist Russia, to which Russia responded that it is not afraid of a new Cold War, despite not desiring one, and holds the West responsible for the consequences. Ultimately, everyone limited themselves to loud criticism without action, which is compared to "thunder without rain" (Zhao Huirong, 2008).

The Influence of the August Events on China. In some articles published before the war, Chinese authors held divided opinions. Some predicted that the situation would not escalate to armed conflict (mainly due to the potential for worsening relations with the West), while others foresaw an exacerbation of the situation.

A number of articles discussed Russia's forceful and undiplomatic policies. China officially stated its condemnation of Russia's recognition of Georgia's territories as independent states and affirmed its respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also condemned interference in Georgia's internal affairs and the attack on it, based on the principles of peaceful coexistence in international law.

Scholarly articles note that, on the one hand, Russia, facing the threat of isolation from the Western world, desperately needed China to continue its internal economic and social development. However, Russian experts simultaneously stated that China and Russia were drawing closer due to objective necessity, but it was doubtful that this would remain the case in the future.

Within academic circles, the view is held that many in Russia believe China's support for Russia is not strong enough, and for them, incomplete support equates to a lack of support, which they are dissatisfied with. However, due to objective needs, they do not dare to express their dissatisfaction openly.

On the other hand, the Russo-Georgian War and the "new methods of Russian expansion in the 21st century" it initiated cast an indelible shadow on Sino-Russian relations. China firmly condemns the violation of another country's sovereignty, in this case, referendums on independence or unification with other countries, because, naturally, the same means could be used in the cases of China's Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, and so on.

Because Russia, to protect its fundamental geostrategic interests, unhesitatingly refuses to abandon the tradition of invading foreign territory and expanding its territory at the expense of conquering others, which contradicts the national self-determination of sovereign states and promotes separatism, leading to the exacerbation and severance of relations with the West, and even resorting to military action, China is forced to exercise greater caution in conducting diplomatic

relations with Russia. This is because there is a possibility that, in addition to China potentially facing pressure from the West, misunderstandings could also arise regarding the issues of Taiwan and Tibet. Moreover, scholarly works note that China opposes forceful policies.

One important detail mentioned is that the war waged by Russia against CIS countries showed them that despite the dissolution of the USSR, the former Soviet republics could not escape Russia's control and would face retaliatory measures in case of any attempt to do so. Consequently, following the erosion of Russia's reputation and influence in the CIS, member states began to consider establishing alternative alliances and relationships, which led to their policy of rapprochement with China. Furthermore, after the war, the Obama administration's weakening of its policy implementation in the South Caucasus and Central Asia allowed China more freedom of action.

One article notes that the evolution of the former USSR has entered a new phase – forces are directed against Europe, meaning in favor of the East. However, after the collapse of the USSR, Russia's aspiration to restore its status as a powerful state and create spheres of influence near its borders, its attempt to change the territory and borders of a former Soviet republic by military means, also intersected with China's geostrategic interests.

China emphasizes Georgia's importance in the Caucasus region and on the global political stage in general. Georgia traditionally remains a cause of confrontation and a "battlefield" between countries. However, while Georgia was previously only a country of regional significance, it has now come under the attention of important global political players because, as a reliable partner, Georgia can ensure the safe transit of energy to the West.

China faces the following realities: on the one hand, if Georgia becomes a member of the European Union and NATO, a transit hub for Asian, especially Central Asian, energy carriers to Europe will

open. This will freely allow Central Asian countries to direct their energy resources to Europe via the shortest route without intermediaries and make them less dependent on Russia and China. Furthermore, this will give the US more freedom of action in the Eastern direction. On the other hand, under Russian influence, China faces the risk of direct communication with the West being hindered. Consequently, Georgia is gradually falling within China's sphere of interest as well.

To summarize, scholarly literature notes Russia's "awakening," Russia's demonstration of force, which ultimately complicates relations with everyone, leading to distrust and suspicion towards it. Russia, facing the threat of isolation from the Western world, is forced to draw closer to China to continue its internal economic and social development, although it does not fully trust China's loyalty. China, for its part, is afforded the opportunity for active development by an isolated Russia, and this relationship is more pragmatic, driven by necessity. At the same time, China condemns Russia's forceful policies. Emphasis is placed on Russia's disregard for diplomatic avenues and gross violation of the principles of peaceful coexistence due to its own interests and goals, which, as already mentioned, contradicts the principles of China's foreign policy. Furthermore, Russia's unilateral conduct of referendums in Georgian territories is contrary to China's interests, as this fact could set a bad precedent for China regarding the Taiwan issue. China respects Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and this position has remained fundamentally unchanged throughout the history and present of Georgia-China relations.

Drawing parallels between the Russo-Georgian and Russo-Ukrainian wars is also frequent in scholarly literature, although it is important to consider the different times, circumstances, different geographical locations of the countries, different capabilities, the US factor, and other aspects.

The authors of the articles carefully observe the reactions of NATO, the European Union, and Russia to various events, their actions, and their priorities in different matters. Corresponding to the changes, China's foreign policy, despite its main fixed axis, is characterized by flexibility in specific situations.

Conclusion

In the process of analyzing the global impact of the August events, we have identified the following assessments from Chinese academic circles:

Framing Relations within the Principles of Foreign Policy. As academic circles note, China recognizes that any deviation from this framework, for any reason, leads to the entanglement of relations at a global level. Russia's rigid policy created problems for investors, alarming and causing reflection among countries. Its global reputation was damaged as it violated key principles of international law, which is tantamount to diplomatic failure. Due to its geostrategic interests, Russia is capable of aggression, which contradicts the national self-determination of sovereign states and promotes separatism. It exacerbates relations with the West and blames the West for this. China is forced to somehow adapt to global changes, pursue a cautious policy to avoid problems with Russia, pressure from other countries on various issues, and continue to develop friendly and partner relations with other nations.

Framing the Taiwan Issue within the Principles of Foreign Policy. According to scholars, Russia's unilateral conduct of referendums in Georgian territories contradicts China's interests, as this fact could set a bad precedent for China regarding the Taiwan issue.

Scholarly literature states that because of analyzing the August events, the opinion emerged that it is necessary to replace the slogan "peaceful reunification of Taiwan" in foreign policy and diplomacy with the call "Taiwan is an inseparable part of China." Any other

reference to it is considered a disrespect and disregard for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and is perceived as gross interference in its internal affairs. Military action over Taiwan, according to international law, would be considered a violation of the principle of non-aggression, which would seriously damage relations between countries. Accordingly, China has framed the Taiwan issue within the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" (particularly highlighting respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-interference in internal affairs; and mutual non-aggression). China must be in economic and military readiness to respond to violations of these three principles in particular.

War Leads to Economic Crisis. Chinese academic circles believe that war causes serious economic damage to the participating countries and not only to them. During wartime, the level of trust in a large country decrease, and various countries around the world, especially Western countries, begin to reconsider their policies towards it. Capital flight begins from the country, the national currency depreciates, leading to an economic crisis, and the country, in a helpless state, effectively seeks assistance.

Articulation of China's Geostrategic Interests. Academic circles engaged in discussions regarding Georgia's geographical location and geostrategic value, assessing its significance both generally and specifically for China. They emphasize Georgia's importance in the Caucasus region and on the global political stage, noting that Georgia has now come under the attention of significant global political actors. In their view, while the erosion of Russia's reputation and influence led some countries to move closer to China, China found itself facing the following contradictory realities: on the one hand, if Georgia becomes a member of the European Union and NATO, a transit hub for Asian, especially Central Asian, energy carriers to Europe will be created. Furthermore, this will grant the US greater freedom of action in the Eastern direction. On the other hand, under conditions of Russian

influence, China's freedom of action is also limited. This expansionist policy of Russia may also intersect with China's geostrategic interests.

We identify the following as the scholarly novelty of this research: determining the reasons for China's significant interest in the August events in Chinese academic literature; China's observation of the positions, reactions, actions, or inaction of countries and international organizations, and the reasons behind them; the partial and temporary influence of Russian propaganda, at times, under conditions of limited information exchange between Georgia and China; China's aspiration towards a multipolar foreign policy; intermittent observation of Georgia's choices and priorities, research into the war's impact on China, and attempts to adapt to the new geopolitical environment.

It is noteworthy that due to the scarcity of information, Russian propaganda sources occasionally mislead Chinese scholars and analysts.

Regarding practical applications, in the case of using the research as a forecast, it is possible to reasonably understand and interpret future opportunities in diplomatic activities.

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