EFTA and the Georgian FTA - more than just a free trade agreement?

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Abstract

This project explores the sociopolitical aspects and implications of trade by using the case of the free trade agreement (FTA) between EFTA and Georgia. More specifically, it investigates the underlying values and belief, in which the notion of trade has come about. By using the 'What's the problem represented to be?' (WPR) approach, it explores the research question of why EFTA have an FTA with Georgia, and to which extent this can help facilitate development, peace and stability in Georgia. Provided with the six interconnected questions that constitute the WPR approach, the analysis takes a social constructivist stance while examining the research question. The analysis revealed that the problem representation in this policy is the adherence to international regimes. *International regimes* in this context refer to the norms, principles, rules and decision-making procedures and the expectations of the actors involved. Whether they are implicit or explicit, these principles, norms and rules give shape to how different actors interact with one another. The international regimes were furthermore divided into three interconnected concepts; democracy, human rights and international development. The latter part of the analysis includes a more critical approach as it investigates what is left unproblematic or silenced in the policy as well as the adverse effects. These adverse effects were furthermore identified being the EU's and Georgia's increased integration into the EU and Euro-Atlantic structures. Claiming to promote security and prosperity, the integration nevertheless could be viewed as creating further instability as Russia has geopolitical aspiration in the region. The other effect of the adherence to international regimes was in relation to production and the issue of origin. With the contested borders of Georgia, trade relations become entangled to the notion of sovereignty and power over territory and resources such as the hazelnuts of Abkhazia. The analysis showed that by using the WPR approach to looking beyond the financial and material aspects of trade, EFTA's objective of having the FTA with Georgia is to promote the deep-seated values of democracy, human rights and sustainable development. As the analysis showed, through the lens of social constructivism, we can see that the actors aren't necessarily concerned with material aspects but the focus lies within the transmittance of ideas, values, beliefs and norms the various international institutions that have been discussed. It becomes evident that although having good intentions are valuable; it can in some instances have the opposite effect, as in the case of the EU, Georgia and Russia tensions.

Key words: EFTA, EU, European Neighborhood Policy, Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, trade, security, social constructivism, WPR approach

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

For decades, countries around the globe have formed trade agreements with one another. Arguably the most famous of its kind, the World Trade Organization is the main organization that regulates trade on an international scale. Established in post-war Western Europe, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which is the predecessor of WTO, was an attempt of economic recovery after decades of instability. Already during the Second World War, the United States and United Kingdom envisioned a post-war international trading system that would diminish trade barriers and create a more fair system of trade tariffs between countries (Irwin, 1994). In 1947, only two years after Germany's surrender, 23 nations signed the first worldwide multilateral free trade agreement. By signing this agreement, the countries committed themselves to three main provisions. The first and perhaps most important requirement was the clause of the "most favored nation" (MFN) principle. This required the members to provide the same tariffs for all members, and created a baseline for more equality and non-discrimination. The second provision concerned the prohibited restriction of imports and exports, with a few exceptions such as the instance of a country's national security. The third provision, added in 1965, the developed member countries eliminated tariffs on imports of developing countries in order to boost their economies. This was believed to be in everyone's best interest, as it would increase the number of middle-class consumers (Amadeo, 2017). Although they were created decades ago, these provisions laid the foundation for the WTO, and are still core principles in today's multilateral trading system.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the European economy, like many of its major cities was in complete rubbles. In a memorandum written in May 1947 by the Under Secretary of the State for Economic Affairs, W.L. Clayton claims that "without further prompt and substantial aid from the United States, economic, social and political disintegration will overwhelm Europe" (Clayton). After a visit in Europe, and frequent dialogue with leaders of various Western European governments, Clayton suggested in this memorandum to provide Europe with a grant in order to enable reconstruction. This grant, more commonly known as the Marshall Plan, was a recovery program for Europe. However, at the center of the Marshall proposals was the notion of collaboration and having a program that most if not all European countries could sign, became a pre-requisite before the United States provided any aid (Van Schaick, 1947). This pre-requisite lead to the establishment of

the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948, with its main purpose of coordinating the efforts and aid received from the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan). The Marshall Plan required from the European side, a cohesive and coordinated body that could receive and distribute the aid between the member countries. Clayton further noted that "Europe cannot recover from this war and again become independent if her economy continues to be divided into many small watertight compartments as it is today" (Clayton). The objective of the OEEC was therefore to have the individual European governments recognize the interdependence of their economies. In 1969, twelve years after the establishment of the OEEC and its subsequent success, the convention establishing the OECD was signed. This convention, which included eighteen European countries as well as the United States and Canada, would accede - and represented the extension of the OEEC.

During the first few decades of the European integration process, with the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) – later incorporated into the European Union, the development of another project was in motion. Founded by the Stockholm Convention in 1960 the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) sought to promote closer economic cooperation and free trade in Europe. This organization was established as another alternative for those countries that were members of the OEEC but not wishing to join the EEC. Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, later known as the "Outer Seven", created the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) with a common goal of strengthening their future position in the realm of free trade (ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA). The following few decades consisted of a shift of members in which a few more countries joined, while others such as Denmark, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Austria, Finland, and Sweden decided to leave and join the EU.

At present, EFTA consists of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Their main task is today made up of the consistent progress of developing the economic relations between the member countries, managing the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA Agreement), and developing EFTA's network of free trade agreements worldwide (The European Free Trade Association). As part of the main objectives, EFTA has since the early 1990's developed free trade agreements with countries outside the EEA/EFTA area. Through extensive networking and the development of contractual free trade relations around the world, EFTA seeks to protect the member countries' economic interests and to "support and reinforce the process of European interregional integration, and to contribute to worldwide efforts to liberalize trade and investment" (The European Free Trade Association). With

these objectives in mind, one might wonder what is actually meant with "European interregional integration", and what the effects of the support and reinforcement of such an objective might entail.

1.2 Research problem area

The interest for this topic was sparked by a trip to Georgia back in 2015. Organized by the Travel Committee in Malmö Association of Foreign Affairs, which I was overseeing, we travelled to Georgia's capital Tbilisi with a group of twelve students. Throughout our week-long stay, we had meetings with various NGO's, diplomats, governmental institutions and local professors and students. Although the majority of the students, including myself, had a background in social-and political sciences, this particular region has not been rewarded as much attention throughout our studies as it perhaps should have. Georgia is a country rich in ancient culture, religion, cuisine and traditions. One could argue that it is the region separating the eastern and the western world. Most striking is perhaps the cuisine in these terms. With its rich spices, colorful plates and exotic fruits and vegetables, this country constitutes a unique cuisine with influences from other Caucasian countries, nearby Middle Eastern culinary traditions, Soviet and European influences. The amazing walnut sauce that accompanies many meat or vegetarian dishes caught my attention in particular. It was my impression that nuts were an integral part of Georgian cuisine. This notion was later confirmed as I read a statement by the former Minister of Agriculture, David Shervashidze, explaining the importance of nuts, and the centuries old traditions that it constitutes. He furthermore claims, "Georgian being is practically impossible without using walnut, hazelnut and almond" (Research Gate). Not only does it constitute an integral part of Georgian cuisine. Hazelnuts are also the second biggest export product from the country, and Georgia is the third largest exporter of hazelnuts in the world.

Confectionery giant Ferrero set up a branch in Georgia in 2007 to supply the key ingredient of their signature product, Nutella. Furthermore, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) between Georgia and the European Union was signed in 2014. The objective of such an agreement is to create a framework for a political and economic relationship, and developing better opportunities for trade and economic growth. In a public briefing from the European Commission, the EC furthermore explain that the deal will "help make governance and policy-making in Georgia more open and inclusive, by aligning it with EU standards and practices" (European Commission). However, rather than smoothening the supply chain for Ferrero and the worldwide beloved Nutella, the DCFTA would instead pose

some challenges. Some of the EU "standards and practices" requires having an official certificate of origin. This poses a particular challenge to the farmers located in Abkhazia, as approximately 10% of the hazelnuts Georgia exports come from this region (The Economist, 2017). Having enjoyed a de facto independence since its war of secession in 1992, the Russian –backed breakaway territory of Abkhazia has no formal trade relations with Georgia. Even if Abkhazian farmers were able to obtain a Georgian certificate to export, it could potentially be considered as an act of national betrayal in the eyes of the Abkhazian de facto government (ibid.). Although the incentive of free trade agreements is to foster political and economic ties between Georgia and the EU, it might tangle and complicate the relationship between Georgia and the separatist region even further. By cutting Abkhazia from Europe, will this region be left even more dependent on Russia?

Against this backdrop, this research will take point of departure of another free trade agreement, namely the FTA between EFTA and Georgia. As a result of EFTA's extensive networking, this FTA signed in June 2016, covers a broad area ranging from trade in goods, services, establishment, and protection of intellectual property rights, government procurement, competition and trade in relation to sustainable development. Although this thesis is written within the Global Refugee Studies program, the aim and focus of this research is in connection with the main study program of Development and International Relations, in which Global Refugee Studies is located within. Intrigued to investigate the underlying values and beliefs in which the notion of trade has come about, this thesis seeks to focus, not on the technical and economic aspects of trade, but on the sociopolitical composition in which trade is lodged within. Therefore, the following problem formulation, combined with the "What's the problem represented to be?" (WPR) approach, seeks to probe into this topic:

- *Why does EFTA have an FTA with Georgia?*

In addition, the following working question will help guide the analysis;

- *To which extent can this FTA help facilitate development, peace and stability in Georgia?*
- *Could it potentially destabilize the region, as Russia has been the major player in this game?*

1.3 Georgia – past and present

Image:1[1]

Located between the Caspian and the Black Sea, Georgia is an independent republic in the north-western Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union. Throughout the 12th and early 13th century, Georgia was a strong and flourishing independent kingdom, with a territory that encompassed the whole present day Caucasus region. The Caucasus region is located at the crossroads between Europe to the west, the Middle-East to the South, and Central Asia to east. Devastated by the Mongol invasion and subsequent struggles against the Ottoman and Persian Empires, Georgia eventually turned to the Russian Empire for protection in the 18th century (Day, East, & Thomas, 2002). As a nationalist government came to power in Georgia after the Russian Revolution, it declared independence in 1918. It was a rather short-lived independence as the occupation by Bolshevik forces in 1921, led Georgia yet again under Russian rule and incorporated into the Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (TFSSR) together with Armenia and Azerbaijan (ibid.). As the TFSSR was dissolved in 1936, Georgia became a separate republic within the Soviet Union. Georgia remained there until Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic was dissolved in August of 1990.

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[1] https://www.google.dk/search?biw=1600&bih=745&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=cejeWpXAB4-YkwWwxajADg&q=georgia+map+country&oq=georgia+map&gs_l=psy-ab.3.1.0l10.14514.18304.0.20360.17.13.3.1.1.0.134.1248.10j3.13.0....0...1c.1.64.psy-ab..0.17.1287...0i67k1j0i10k1.0.PySQU-K_wbA#imgrc=zBjaNAJjY1F2HM:

The push for independence from the USSR already took place 1989. On April 9th the Russian Army used military tanks and guns to disperse a peaceful demonstration that took place on Rustaveli Avenue in Georgia's capital Tbilisi. The demonstration, referred to as the Tbilisi Massacre, was a culmination of Georgian independence and anti-separatism sentiments of Abkhazia (Georgian Journal). By April 9th the following year, the country adopted a *Declaration of Independence*. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a Soviet-era dissident, won the parliamentary elections during the *Round Table for National Liberation,* and became a speaker of the parliament (ibid.). The new government included many nationalizing policies. Having declared itself as "a unitary state with no internal boundaries" Georgia furthermore effectively abolished the separatist entities (Nilsson N. , 2014). Some of the nationalizing policies also included linguistic regulations, intending to make Georgian the only recognized state language. Referred to as "guests" on Georgian territory, many minority groups, particularly the Abkhaz and South Ossetians expressed their objections to this statement. In March 1991, the Soviet Union held referendum on preserving the Union. Wanting to preserve their ethno-cultural distinction, the Abkhaz and South Ossetians deemed it not viable within an independent Georgia. Prohibited in Georgia, the separatist regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia nevertheless held a referendum that resulted in a vast majority voting in favor of remaining in the USSR. Georgia on the other hand, declared on the second anniversary of the Tbilisi Massacre, its official sovereignty from the Soviet Union.

One of the key issues of the conflict between Ossetian and Georgians were the history of the territory. Like many conflicts over territory, the central questions were concerned with who were there first and consequently, who does it historically belong to, and many historians from both Georgians and Ossetians have attempted to prove the other side wrong (Sammut & Cvetkovski, 1996). Considering themselves as members of the Southern part of the Ossetian nation, the South Ossetians claim that they have been living on this land for centuries. The Georgians on the other hand, view this territory of being one of the ancient *Georgian* centers for *"material and spiritual culture"*, and moreover believes the South Ossetians to be newcomers to the area, hence not entitled the right of the territory. Tensions worsened between Georgia, with its newly elected president Gamsakhurdia, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Gamsakhurdia attempted to tighten the grip around South Ossetia, however this proved to be a greater challenge, as he was faced with strongly motivated Russian-backed resistance (Wolff). The conflict escalated in the end 1991 into to a violent confrontation, where the regional capital of South Ossetia, Tskhinvali, was frequently shelled. The tensions

lingered until the disposal of Gamsakhurdia in December 1991. Soon after, Eduard Shevardnadze ascended the presidential position. The OSCE-mediated ceasefire *Sochi Agreement* was signed by Shevardnadze and Boris Yeltsin in June 1992 (Wolff), establishing a military exclusion zone as an attempt to end the conflict and hostilities between the parties. The OSCE furthermore employed an Observer Mission, a Russian led peace-keeping mission as well as a Commission to facilitate cooperation (ibid). The conflict lasting from 1989-1992, claimed more than a thousand lives, and furthermore displaced 100 000 people and resulted in extensive damage on homes and infrastructure (ibid.) (Sammut & Cvetkovski, 1996).

The Georgian-Abkhazian conflict was slightly different from the Ossetian conflict in terms of its rationale over territory. In contrast to the Ossetian case, Georgians recognize Abkhazia as the historical homeland for the Abkhaz people (Sammut & Cvetkovski, 1996, p. 7). However as a result of Gamsakhurdia's policy of "Georgianization", the Abkhaz were all the more determined that the establishment of their own state was necessary in order to their ethnic survival (Wolff). As Georgia gained its independence, the Abkhaz proceeded to declare their desire to leave Georgia, and remain part of the Soviet Union/Russian Federation. The tensions that had been building up since 1989, eventually escalated into to a full-scale war, as Georgian paramilitaries entered the Abkhazian capital Sukhumi in the summer of 1992. With assistance from other countries, primarily the Russian Federation, the ethnic Abkhaz fought to expand their autonomy, while Georgia on the other hand fought to maintain the territory under Tbilisi rule. After the sixteen month period of conflict, the Human Rights Watch reported violations of both human rights and international law. A report from 1995 states;

> *[…]both sides of the conflict showed reckless disregard for the protection of the civilian population, and are responsible for gross violations of international humanitarian law – the laws of war. Combatants both deliberately targeted and indiscriminately attacked civilians and civilian structures, killing hundreds of civilians through bombing, shelling and rocket attacks* (Human Rights Watch, 1995).

As the cease-fire agreement came into effect in October 1993, the Abkhazian forces had control over most of the territory. Having claimed more than 4,000 lives, the war moreover left roughly 200,000 persons displaced (Human Rights Watch, 1995).

With the election of former president Saakashvili in 2004, tensions with the break-away regions brought the "frozen conflicts" to the surface yet again, as the new president took back the other autonomous region of Ajaria under central Georgian government control again

(Djibladze & Lang). Offered by Saakashvili, discussions of autonomy were rejected by South Ossetia in 2005, while instead restating their desire for independence. The already strained relationship between Georgia and Russia was furthermore put under more pressure, as president Putin announced to support the two regions if the Georgian government decided to intervene militarily in the regions. The situation remained tense between Georgia and the separatists regions until it came to a sharp escalation in August 2008. Fearing that Russia's expression for support was a quest for a Russian annexation of Georgian territory, Georgia decided to intervene. After engaging with local separatist fighters as well as Russian troops, Georgia declared a war as Russian forces took control over the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali. As part of Saakashvili's aspirations to build a stronger relationship between Georgia and EU, Georgia participated in the EU Neighborhood policies which was embedded in the Action Plan of 2006 (Nilsson & Silander, 2016). As the majority of the Georgian political elite supported the move towards political integration with the EU and stronger ties to NATO, Russia's reaction was to work to prevent any new eastern enlargements (ibid.) (Nilsson N. , 2014). The closer ties intensified the security challenges, and according to Nilsson & Silander lead to the military intervention on August 7th 2008. The fighting continued for another five days, until a ceasefire agreement, brokered by French presidency of the EU, was signed between Russia and Georgia on August 12th (CNN). In only 5 days, the war nevertheless claimed around a 1,000 lives and left about 100,000 people displaced. After adopting the ceasefire agreement the hostilities gradually diminished. However, the war altered situation on the ground for the two separatist entities as Russia recognizes their status as independent states, while the rest of the international community regards it still part of Georgia.

1.4 Content of chapters

This study investigates the socio-political aspects of international agreements such as the FTA between EFTA and Georgia. The introduction is followed by an explanation of the chosen methodological and material approach, together with a brief theoretical discussion. Following the methodological chapter is the analysis chapter. This chapter is furthermore divided in to six major sections, each constituting the six questions that the WPR approach is comprised of. The first section probes what the problem is represented to be, while the second investigates the underlying presuppositions of the problem representation. In section three we look at how the problem representation has come about. Section four and five serves a more

critical part of the analysis, as it investigates what is silenced, and what effects are produced by the problem representation. Lastly, section six examines where the problem representation has been reproduced and disseminated. The final chapter concludes with the main arguments.

1.5 Limitations

In an attempt to assess policies in another way, the WPR approach offers to examine policies and government by questioning the *problem* rather than seeing them as *problem solving*. It is important to note that this approach does not follow a conventional form of policy analysis, by evaluating, measuring and declaring the successfulness of the particular policy. Working at an entirely different level, the aim is to examine the premises underpinning the problem representations, and how these understandings have come about. As Bacchi furthermore contends, "the notion of 'fixing' carries with it an understanding that something needs to be 'fixed', that there is a *problem* (Bacchi, 2009). Most policies do not explicitly declare that that there is a problem for the policy to fix, however it becomes an implicit part of the policy. With an open-ended text selection, it should be noted that choosing policies is an interpretive exercise in itself. By choosing certain policy areas, my particular interest or concerns are reflected. Moreover, in order to understand a selected policy, a solid understanding of the background is crucial. Having a Bachelor's degree in European Studies, that was largely concerned with EU, I have a preconceived idea about how the European institutions work. In addition, having traveled to Georgia, and gaining new friends and acquaintances with Georgians I also gained a particular understanding of the country's culture and history. It is important to consider that this too, might affect the way I perceive and analyze the information in this project. The people I have learned from are living in Tbilisi, and therefore have a specific understanding of the issues in Georgia, that are perhaps different from those living in other regions of the country. On this note, another direction that could have been interesting to include in this research is the point of view of the people living in the break-away regions of Abkhazia or South-Ossetia.

2. Methodology

2.1 The WPR approach

The methodological considerations selected in this project takes point of departure in the *What's the problem represented to be?* approach (WPR approach). It is an approach to study

policies, which focuses on the underlying problems in which a policy comes into being. Policies are generally thought of as addressing something that needs to be "fixed", hence it assumes that there is a *problem.* However, as Bacchi further explains "most government policies do not officially declare that there is a problem that the policy will address and remedy" (Bacchi, 2009). It is rather implicit that the nature of a policy is to create change and implying that there is something that actually needs to change. The notion of *implied* is at the core of the WPR approach, as it seeks to interrogate the *implicit* problems, making them *explicit,* and examine them closely. It furthermore postulates that the *problems* are endogenous in their character, rather than exogenous – hence policies is giving shape to *problems,* instead of solely addressing them. Heavily influenced by Foucault, it is a critical mode of analysis. According to Foucault, "

> *A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based"* (Foucault, 1994, s. 456).

The WPR approach aims at steering the attention towards how problem representations can play a role in how we are governed, by teasing out the taken-for-granted assumptions lodged within a policy (Bacchi, 2009).

As a tool for the analysis, the WPR approach comprises a systematic methodology that provides a set of six interrelated questions. The first question is rather straight forward, as it serves as a clarification exercise. Posing the question "What is the problem represented to be?" the aim is to identify what the policy is hoping to change. Bacchi argues that "since how you feel about something determines what you suggest doing about it, it is equally true to say that looking at what is proposed as a policy intervention will reveal how the issue is being thought about" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 2). The essential feature of this approach is to identify and interrogate the problem representations within the policy. It is however important to note that there could potentially be multiple *problems* within one proposal, as will become evident in the analysis chapter.

The real work begins with the following question, as it asks "what presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the *problem*?" The aim of this question is to identify epistemological and ontological assumptions that the problem representations rests upon. Drawing upon constructionist premises, the WPR approach sees governments as active

agents in the production of policy 'problems' and asserts that various forms of knowledge are shaped by the role of socio-political processes. This part of the analysis entails searching for the deep-seated cultural values lodged within the problem representations. Building on the notion of 'archive', and through the Foucauldian exercise of archeology, the goal is to identify the conceptual logics that must be in place in order for the problem representations to make sense. As Bacchi argues, "policy is about meaning creation and our task is to identify how meaning is created" (Bacchi, 2009). In order to make this obtainable, the key is to identify the binaries, key concepts and categories within the policy. By identifying and examining the binaries or dichotomies, the goal is to reveal how the conceptual logics may limit our understanding of an issue. In addition, policies are filled with concepts. These concepts may have different meanings to different actors, and it is therefore important to identify. Moreover, in relation to *categories*, the aim is investigate how governing takes place through the role of concepts.

The next question seeks to address how the problem representation has come about. Through Foucault's notion of genealogy, the task at hand in this part of the analysis is to extract the development and decisions which allowed the problem representation to take shape. As Bacchi furthermore explains, "in genealogy, attention is directed to the power relations that allowed and allow particular problem representations to emerge and gain status" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 43). In other words, the focus is on the process of how something came to be. Taking the position believing that power is *productive* rather than *possessed*, the idea is to study its effects and margins. By asking the question "how has this representation of the 'problem' come about?" it directs attention to the operations of power through the various practices and strategies from which rule is shaped (Bacchi, 2009, p. 38).

Reflecting on the gaps and silences in the problem representations, question four explores the critical aspect of the WPR approach. Posing the questions "What is left unproblematic in the problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?" the aim is to consider the limits of the problem representations and to address issues that fail to be problematized. Bacchi further explains, "The argument here is not simply that there is another way to think about the issue but that specific policies are constrained by the ways in which they represent the *problem*" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 13). By exploring the discourse analysis exercised in question two the objective in this section of the analysis is to bring into discussion distorts, misrepresentation and silences. Question five continues the critical analysis. Posing the question "What effects are produced by this

representation of the problem?" the aim is to scrutinize how the representation of a problem effect the parties involved. Furthermore, such effects according to the WPR approach may be quite subtle in their influence; however they may not be insignificant. Bacchi suggests three interconnected and overlapping types of effects to be included in the analysis; discursive effects, subjectification and lived effects. Discursive effects relates to the ways in which the deep-seated values, presuppositions and discourses frame the problem representations which in turn make them challenging to think about differently. By looking at subjectification effects, the aim is to examine how we become subject of a particular kind/position. Another part of this concept is what Foucault calls "dividing practices" – the notion that policy often set groups in opposition to each other. The issue of lived effects refers to how problem representations impact peoples day to day lives in a more direct manner. Lastly, building on questions three, the last question pays attention to the means of which problem representations become dominant.

2.2 Material

The WPR approach allows the text selection to be fairly open-ended. According to Bacchi, a good place to start is a piece of legislation or government report (Bacchi, 2009). The main document of importance will in this particular research be the *Free Trade Agreement between the EFTA States and* Georgia. This document, like most policies include a preamble which addresses the underlying assumptions, explains its general objectives, and provides meaning to the operative part of the agreement. The first chapter outlines the general provisions while chapter two and three address trade in both non-agricultural and agricultural products. Chapter four consists of the provisions regarding sanitary and phytosanitary and the following chapter concerns trade in service. Chapter six applies the provisions concerning the commercial presence in all sectors, which is addressing all aspect of establishing business/office in the foreign country, such as *transparency, personnel, payments and transfers.* Further, the issue of intellectual property is addressed in chapter seven. They refer to international trade agreements such as the WTO Agreement of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, stating that the Parties shall provide adequate protection in line with these agreements. Chapter eight deals with government procurement, while the following addresses the rules of competition concerning undertakings. Chapter ten addresses trade in relation to sustainable development. This section addresses issues such as rules of international labor standards, trade in forest-based products, environmental agreements and

the promotion of trade and investment to foster sustainable development. The following chapter provides the institutional provisions, as it establishes a joint committee comprised of members of both parties, in order to supervise and review the implementation of the agreement. Chapter twelve concerns the provisions on the settlement of any potential disputes. The final chapter contains information on the annexes and appendices, which is claimed to constitute an integral part of the agreement.

As the WPR approach allows for a fairly open-ended text selection, additional material will be scrutinized in order to get a deeper understanding of the problem representations. Therefore, the Convention Establishing the European Free Trade Organization becomes useful, as can shed light upon the organizations' objectives and of its very existence. The convention was first drafted in Stockholm in January 1960, by the founding countries; Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. After both accessions and withdraws from various countries, the current constellation of countries in the association is Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. An updated version of the Convention was signed in 2001. This version, more commonly referred to as the Vaduz Convention, entered into force in June 2002, and covers all the key aspects of trade and according to EFTA "considerably reinforced the ties between the EFTA countries" (The European Free Trade Association). The Convention is thirty pages, and includes a preamble followed by eighteen chapters covering the following topics; *objectives; free movement of goods; technical barriers to trade; state aid; public undertakings and monopolies; rules of competition; protection of intellectual property; free movement of persons; investment; trade in services; dumping; public procurement; current payments; exceptions and safeguards; economic and monetary policy co-operation; institutional provision; consultations and dispute settlement; general provisions.* The revised Convention helps create cohesion in the economic relations between the members, as well as providing a common basis for establishing trade relations with other countries around the world.

Additionally, I would use the Joint Declaration of Cooperation between Georgia and the EFTA states, which were the beginning stages of the present agreement. The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) would also be highly relevant in the analysis, as they shed light upon the EUs objectives in cooperating with Georgia and the Caucasus region. Moreover, governmental reports and commentaries will also be utilized in order to deepen the interrogation of the problem representation.

2.3 Conceptual framework

The theory of social constructivism provides a useful lens for analyzing how international organizations such as EFTA behave, communicate and reproduce information. Through the social construction of reality, we are questioning what is taken for granted. With this we are concerned with the origins of social constructs which furthermore leads us to investigate how the ideas and knowledge have come about and how it has been understood and reproduced by various actors. Like suggested in the WPR approach, in order to understand the origins of the concepts, we may look at the historical development and genealogy of the social construct. According to Barnett, the attention needs to be directed to "the interplay between existing ideas and institutions, the political calculations by leaders who had ulterior motives, and morally minded actors who were attempting to improve humanity" (Barnett, 2014, s. 159). Moreover, taking into consideration alternative pathways are also crucial when using a social constructivist lens. This is examined in through question four of the WPR approach, when addressing the silences and how the problem representation can be thought about differently. Following Max Weber's notion that we are cultural beings constantly trying to provide significance, social constructivism examine how actors make their activities meaningful. This is furthermore examined in question two and three of the WPR approach which seeks to address the presuppositions and underlying and deep seated values of the problem representation as well as probing into the development of these understandings.

Social constructivism has three main ontological positions (Agius, 2013). The first pertains to the normative or ideational premises, given more, if not all attention than rather material structures. Applying the WPR approach's set of six questions, these normative and ideational structures will be examined throughout the analysis. The second claim of constructivism in relation to its ontological stance is how identities are significant. As Wendt amply puts it, "a gun in the hands of a friends is a different thing from one in the hands of an enemy, and enmity is a social, not material relation" (Agius, 2013). Identities are important factors of giving actors interests, shaping how they act, behave and the goals they pursue. By examining the meaning and content of norms and values, we get a better picture of why actors behave the way they do. With the main aim of probing into why EFTA have an FTA with Georgia, it is useful to look beyond the mere economic benefits of such an agreement through the lens of social constructivism, paying attention to the social and not material relation.

Lastly, the third ontological position is the claim that agents and structures are mutually constituted. The idea here is simply that actors shape the world, and vice versa (ibid.). Actors such as EFTA and the EU shape and are influenced by human relations and international politics and relations is not something that is independent from us. To sum it up, social constructivism is relevant to this paper because it serves to help explain how states and international organizations are shaped by norms and rules in the constructed world system.

3. Analysis

3.1 What's the problem represented to be?

This chapter serves as a clarification exercise in order to get a grasp on the purpose of the agreement, and more specifically to identify the implied problem or problems that the agreement seeks to address. Bacchi furthermore contends, "since how you feel about something determines what you suggest doing about it, it is equally true to say that looking at what is a proposed policy intervention will reveal how the issue is being thought about" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 3)

As a way into the broad topic of international trade, the selected text of analysis is the *Free Trade Agreement between EFTA States and Georgia* (hereinafter referred to as the "Agreement"). As the WPR approach begins by examining what is proposed as a change, and working our way backwards, we can initially see that closer cooperation in trade is the overarching theme in the Agreement. The Agreement calls attention to the "common wish to strengthen the links between EFTA States and Georgia by establishing close and lasting relations" (Free Trade Agreement Between The EFTA States and Georgia, 2016). In this Agreement the parties share an understanding that by strengthening the links between them will ultimately lead to closer and longer lasting cooperation. Moreover, the preamble as well as the first chapter of the Agreement discloses its objectives in further detail, reflecting not only upon the general theme of trade, but more specifically on the values and principles trade relations should be based on. Such principles does not appear by themselves, but are grounded in a much larger scheme. Hence, we can extract that the problem is constituted to be the adherence to international regimes.

International regimes in this context refer to the norms, principles, rules and decision-making procedures and the expectations of the actors involved. According to Krasner, norms constitute the standards of behavior in relation to rights and obligations. Moreover, he refers

to *principles* as "beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude" (Krasner, 1982, p. 186). Rules are described as the proscriptions for action, while decision-making procedures are to be understood as the "prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice" (ibid.). This understanding is also in line with other scholars such as Keohane and Nye, who describes international regime as "networks of rules, norms and procedures that regularize behavior and control its effect" (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Moreover, Haas holds a similar perception, arguing that an international regime is a set of procedures, rules and norms (Haas, 1980). Whether they are implicit or explicit, these principles, norms and rules give shape to how different actors interact with one another. EFTA and the Agreement constitute components of an international regime. The international regimes are effective in the way that it serves a broad array of interests. As Krasner further writes;

> *[regimes]protect the interest of the state and other powerful members of society; to deter, suppress, and punish undesirable activities; to provide for order, security, and justice among members of a community; and to give force and symbolic representation to the moral values, beliefs, and prejudices of those who make laws* (Krasner, 1982).

The Agreement does include many of these aspects. It is evident particularly in the preamble, such as stating its *commitment to democracy; desire for non-discrimination; building on respective rights and obligations; affirming commitment to combat corruption; promoting principles of transparency'*. It includes suggestions, affirmations, recommendations and acknowledgements and so forth on how the status quo is, and what it could and perhaps more importantly *should* look like.

For the sake of clarity in this analysis it is useful to divide the concept of international regime into three different yet interconnected policy areas which become evident in the first chapter of the Agreement. The first is the subject of democratic principles. The second pertains to human rights and the third is sustainable development. These three terms requires further reflection and interrogation. The WPR approach allows the concepts to come under such scrutiny as it probes all levels of the problem representation.

3.2 What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this problem representation?

This chapter attempts to look deeper into the conceptual logics that underpin the problem representation of international regimes. The aim is to address the deep-seated values that give shape to the way we think and talk about an issue. Moreover, this part of the analysis is directed towards the Foucauldian notion of "epistême", which is concerned with fundamental worldviews and the assumed thought that lies behind the problem representation.

As we have seen, international trade is not a new phenomenon. According to Shiffman every human has a natural inclination to trade, with the basic definition of exchanging one thing for another (Shiffman, 2013). Aside from the less favorable influence of military conquest, trade and cross-cultural exchange have arguably played a crucial role in terms of external stimuli between nations and cultures and its development. As Curtin interestingly points out, the very nature of the text in this project is a result of the interactions between cultures over time through history. He furthermore writes;

The English language is derived from one of those that came into Western Europe with German immigrants, combined with elements of Latin, originally imposed by imperial conquerors from the south, plus other borrowings. The alphabet came from the Phoenicians. The page numbers are "Arabic," which actually means that the Europeans learned about them from the Arabs, who had borrowed them in turn from the Indians, who invented positional notation in the first place (Curtin, 1984).

Trade and exchange of commodities and ideas and values have played a crucial role throughout human history. From the ancient Greek Agoras and the Viking era merchants, to the Hanseatic League of trading towns, humans have engaged in trading networks and routes for centuries. The vast cultural and technical heritage we enjoy today didn't come from a single human group, but a collection of cultures and knowledges from around the world.

Although we can see that trade is an ancient "activity", the problem representation of international regimes is rather recent in comparison. As the task is to identify and examine the values and deep-seated cultural premises that underpin the problem representation, we need to think about the actors involved and what they constitute. Today, we can see over 200 neatly defined territorial units on the earth's surface. This is not to be taken for granted, as it holds a specific understanding of how the world functions and how it should be governed. The presumption that the world consists of sovereign and self-governing states has been the

predominant understanding in what Baylis et al. refers to as "orthodox state-centric conceptions of world politics" (Baylis, Smith, & Owens, 2014).   The basis of this understanding was established through the Westphalian Constitution of the world order in 1648. Agreed upon by Europe's rulers in the Peace Treaties of Westphalia and Osnabruck, the normative structure of the world was established. Through this dogma, they would recognize the right to govern one's own territory, and perhaps more importantly, without interference of others (ibid.). With the Westphalian constitution, sovereign nation-states were able to legitimize the territoriality and it furthermore established the location and limits of political power. Moreover, with sovereignty we refer to the state or governments' "rightful entitlement to exclusive, unqualified and supreme rule within a delimited territory" (McGrew, 2014, p. 24). For the weaker states however, the notion of sovereignty has not always been enjoyed to the fullest extent. According to Krasner, the Westphalian system constituted a 'organized hypocracy' for the weaker states (Baylis, Smith, & Owens, 2014).   Although the concept of sovereign statehood was already in place by 1648, it wasn't until the twentieth century that the principles were more or less universally adopted (ibid.).

We can extrapolate that the establishment of international organizations throughout the twentieth century such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, NATO, the European Union and OECD marked the beginning of the institutionalization of the problem representation. Moving from state-centric geopolitics to geocentric global politics, international organizations such as the ones mention above, take the Westphalian system into review, and furthermore blur the line between what is domestic and international domain (McGrew, 2014). These organizations challenges the one-dimensional aspect of the Westphalian world order, mainly concerned with the conflict and cooperation between states, and revolves much more around the networks of rules, norms and procedures that regularize the behavior of states and actors and control its effect.

By looking at the Agreement through the lens of regime theory, we can identify three main interconnected policy areas. The first relates to the issue of democracy. The Parties to the Agreement expresses their objective for adherence to democratic principles. With the EFTA Georgia Agreement they state they are "reaffirming their commitment to democracy…" (Free Trade Agreement Between The EFTA States and Georgia, 2016). By addressing the issue of democracy, both in the preamble and in the first chapter under general provisions and objective, they effectively demonstrate that democracy is the aspired and correct form of governance. The binary democratic/undemocratic comes into play, and we can

question the underlying reason for including this particular aspect in the Agreement. Is it because EFTA views Georgia is lacking democratic principles in its governance? Or that Georgia views that EFTA is less democratic than it should be? Regardless of the logic behind, it is the very notion of democracy - a socially constructed concept that is of main importance. From the Greek words, *demos* meaning 'the people' and *kratein* meaning 'to rule', the general understanding people have an entitlement to make decisions, which furthermore derives from a system of basic rules such as a constitution (Outhwaite, 2003, s. 147). However, as the basic notion of a democratically governed society is that representatives make decisions on behalf of the people who elect them, it becomes problematic when the borders and boundaries of a given society are disputed as in the case of Georgia with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The second concept to take into further scrutiny is the notion of human rights. The Agreement explains that they are;

> *Reaffirming their commitment to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with their obligations under international law, including as set out in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Free Trade Agreement Between The EFTA States and Georgia, 2016).

The infancy of modern human rights can be traced back to the Enlightenment (The Danish Institute for Human Rights). The *United States Declaration of Independence* of 1776 and the *French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* of 1789 were among the first records of modern human rights (ibid.). The existence of these rights however, came under attack during the mid-twentieth century with the World War II and the exposure of the Holocaust. Surpassing the previous notion of John Locke's *active* 'natural rights', modern human rights extends to cover *passive* rights as well. *Passive* rights refers to the notion that rights are also entitled to those who may choose to exercise them (Outhwaite, 2003).With this Agreement EFTA and Georgia commit themselves to the rules, norms and principles that the international regime of human rights holds.

The third concept within the problem representation of the adherence international regimes pertains to sustainable development. EFTA and Georgia are through this Agreement;

> ***reaffirming*** *their commitment to pursue the objective of sustainable development and recognizing the importance of coherence and mutual supportiveness of trade, environment and labour policies in this respect* (Free Trade Agreement Between The EFTA States and Georgia, 2016)

Identifying the meaning of the concept *sustainable development* is crucial given the nature of concepts often being contested. By further scrutiny, we can see that the rules, norms and principles that this regime holds, is constituted in the organizations the Agreement refers to such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations. According to Pisani, "the concept of development received increasing attention from the mid-20th century" (Pisani, 2006). Defined as 'an evolutionary process in which the human capacity increased in terms of initiating new structures, coping with problems, adapting to continuous change, and striving purposefully and creatively to attain new goals"(ibid.), we can see that it is not too far from the definition of sustainable development that is most widely used today. Although it has been defined in many ways, the most commonly quoted is from the Brundtland Report;

> *Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own* (Brundtland, 1987)

Through the United Nations Conference of Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972, and the subsequent establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the political basis of sustainable development was provided. Central to this definition was the concept of fairness − not only towards future generations, but also to the people at present living as the world's poor. As all policies are elaborated in discourse and we furthermore understand discourse as systems of meanings, we can see that all three concepts (democracy, human rights and sustainable development) are interconnected. We can extract that there is general understanding, a presupposition that they all share the common deep-seated value of fairness.

3.3 How has the representation of the problem come about?

The next step is to reflect upon the development of the identified problem representations. Taking point of departure in Foucault's genealogical theory, the aim is to identify the points in time when key decisions were made that took the problem representation in a particular direction (Bacchi, 2009, p. 11). Building upon the assumptions and presuppositions identified in the previous section, the task is to follow the twists and turns of history of the problem representation of adherence to the three international regimes. If we take a closer look at concept of democracy, we can see that its genealogy and trajectory must not be taken for granted. As the previous section shows, the word democracy stems from the Greek. Moreover, as many claim democracy to be unique to Europe and its former

"offshoots", it is important to note that its approaches of consultation and rule of the people are not only confined to the limits of those countries and regions of the world. Isakahn and Stockwell furthermore points out, "democracy may be a characteristic of our way of life, but it is certainly not confined to the West" (Isakhan & Stockwell, 2012, s. xiii). Having established that democracy reaches outside the parameters of Europe, we may further explore the how it came to gain so much dominance. Due to the scope of this project however, the focus will be on the development of democracy within Western political philosophy mainly in Europe and its offshots from the eighteenth century onwards.

3.3.1   The development of democracy

We need to think historically about the concept "democracy". This term, which has become naturalized within the discourse of both the political, public and domestic sphere, has since the post-Cold War era been one of the most notable features of its time and space. External processes of the international system heavily influenced the internal process in democratization throughout the times. Examples of such external influences can be seen in the cases of the United States independence in 1776 as well as the French Revolution from 1789. As Hobson (2012) argues, much of the objective steering the United States in becoming a federation of democratic republics was the notion of breaking free from its imperial ruler, and become an independent actor within the international system. Also affected by external forces, the French revolution was heavily influenced by the environment it took place within. Hobson further illustrates;

> *A Europe made up of aristocratic great powers that saw the democratic principles of the French as a fundamental threat to their existence. Not only did the revolutionary wars fundamentally reshape international politics, they also conditioned the possibilities for democracy in France and beyond into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.* (Hobson, 2012, s. 457)

Justified by the notion of natural rights, both revolutions embodied the idea that these rights belong to all human beings, and this belief furthermore affected the ways in which political authority was structured and exercised. According to Morrow, this idea has played a very central part in the history of political thought, particularly in relation to democracy (Morrow, 2005). Established by a limited number of participants already in the seventeenth century, the argument of natural rights gained even more momentum during the later parts of the eighteenth century. Anglo-American thinker Thomas Paine was a strong proponent of

democracy. By appealing to natural rights, he effectively made his claim that monarchy was insufficient in the protection of these rights (ibid.).

During the nineteenth century, thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham were influential in the discourse of political thought with his belief that democracy was necessary to 'good government'. He argued that the political power and authority should promote the interest of all members of the community (Morrow, 2005). Others such Edmund Burke and Joseph de Maistre were slightly more critical against the movement towards democracy. Proponents of a more traditional set of rule, they identified the benefits of a monarchical rule and sought to preserve these. John Stuart Mill was also critical towards democracy in regards to the consequences of including the public opinion. Taking a very elitist approach, Mill argued that democracy would likely be morally and culturally suffocating through 'tyranny of the majority' (ibid). Other nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers were critical towards democracy, due to their belief that human life requires an authority. As Morrow further illustrates, "for them, authority was necessary to sustain social and political order and to compensate for the intellectual and moral failings of ordinary members the population" (Morrow, 2005, p. 11). This was constituted in the various forms of government in the twentieth century such as in fascism and national socialism. As Hobson contends, "The majority of the twentieth century was shaped by a conflict between ruling ideologies, but with the collapse of the Soviet empire, democracy outlasted its rivals" (Hobson, 2012). The end of the twentieth century proved to be a great success for democracy; however as we have seen, it required efforts across time and space. At present, scholars such as Larry Diamond and the late Robert A. Dahl have worked extensively on democracy. Being one of the most prominent political theorists of our time, Dahl argued that the development of democracy should not be taken for granted as having roots in Ancient Greece, and gradually spreading throughout the world. He contends, "[…] the course of democratic history would look like the path of a traveler crossing a flat and endless desert broken by only a few hills, until the path finally begins the long climb to its present heights (Dahl, 1998, pp. 7-9). Just as the development of democracy in time, the space should also be taken into account. He argues that in addition to a diffusion of the democratic values and beliefs, it is likely that democracy has been invented more than once and more than in one place. Larry Diamond suggests that, […] democracy is the only form of government with broad international legitimacy" (Chelsey, 2012).

3.3.2   The development of human rights

Interconnected with the concept of democracy, the development of human rights carry roots that reach back to the age of Enlightenment. With Hobbes and Locke as the forerunners, natural rights played a crucial part of the development of democracy and the world as we experience it today. Locke's theory of the three natural rights; life, liberty and property, were understood as independent from the laws or cultures of any given government. Bentham however, famously disagreed with the notion of natural rights, as he opposed the way that rights was perceived as valid even though they weren't recognized by everyone. Bentham's claim resonated amply throughout time and as Gregg contends, "[…] the ancient legacy of natural and imprescriptible rights retains its attraction today, most powerfully in the notion of human rights" (Gregg, 2012). In an attempt to find the one true history of the development of human rights, one will soon discover that there are competing stories. However, including perspective from human rights scholar Samuel Moyn, offer some insights into the development of seeing contemporary human rights as a set of global political norms. According to Moyn, having roots with the Greek philosophers, and furthermore processed through roman philosophy, medieval natural law, and early modern natural rights and eventually leading to the Declaration of Independence and later the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the concept of human rights as we refer to it today was coined in the 1940's. Without going into too much detail, it is however worth mentioning Hannah Arendt's critique that human rights were pertaining mainly to those of a collective membership. Based on Arendt's understanding of rights, Moyn contends that "there is a clear and fundamental difference between earlier rights, all predicated on belonging to a political community, and eventual 'human rights'" (Moyn, 2010, p. 12). Finally, the understanding of the human rights we have today was formally institutionalized with the Universal Declaration of Human rights in 1948.

3.3.3   The historical roots of sustainable development

Sustainable development is a contemporary buzzword that emerged out of a context in which we witnessed a growing awareness of ecological challenges. The current definition suggests that "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987). In order to fully understand what this entails, it is useful to examine how this concept has come about, which will reveal the main lines of discourse. According to Pisani, a good starting point when talking about sustainable development is to look at the notion of progress

(Pisani, 2006). Already emerging in the pre-modern times, it was within Hebrew and Christian theology that gave an expression to the linear conception of time (ibid.). Throughout the medieval period the notion of progress was linked with the idea of an afterlife, while throughout the Western modernity with the Reformation, thinkers recovered their belief in the linear conception of human life. During the Enlightenment, thinkers such as Comte and Hegel believed in the modern and empirical sciences' ability to master the nature. Linked to economic growth and material advancement, the Industrial Revolution during the eighteenth century highly influenced human progress. Pisani furthermore contends that this revolution made people believe they were entitled to "dominate the natural order and transform it into consumer goods, that it is necessary and acceptable to ravage the landscape in the pursuit of maximum economic production […] (ibid. p.84). As wood was used in nearly all production processes, it was an indispensable raw material during this time. As a result of ship building, mining among other purposes, awareness of the real danger of material shortage was raised. First used in forestry circles, the German Hans Carl von Carlowitz introduced the term *nachhaltende Nutzung* (sustainable use) which was the beginning of referring to 'sustainability' (ibid). Another challenge of resources was brought to attention by the prominent political economist Thomas Robert Malthus. In his work *Essay on the principle of population* from 1798, he stresses the concern that population growth will eventually outpace production, essentially leading to famine. The population therefore had to be restricted, either through preventative checks, such as abstaining from procreation or positive population checks, such as the instance of war or disease (Malthus, 1798).

During the nineteenth century, the focus on resource depletion was in relation to coal. As Pisani contends, the Brits saw it necessary to adopt a fuel sparing attitude so that the coal reserves would not be exhausted. Another prominent thinker worth mentioning in relation to sustainability is Alfred Russel Wallace. In his work *Our Wonderful Century* from 1898, he criticizes humans for plundering the earth of its resources;

> *Not only have forest-growths of many hundreds of years been cleared away, often with disastrous consequences, but the whole of the mineral treasures of the earth's surface, the slow products of the long-past eons of time and geological change, have been and still being exhausted, to an extent never before approached, and probably not equaled in amount during the whole preceding period of human history* (Wallace, 1898, s. 869).

Addressing the negative effects and perhaps more importantly the long-term effects of the plundering, Wallace's work can perhaps be viewed as the early draft of the Brundtland Report. The twentieth century ideas of human development were characterized with a pessimistic outlook through the devastation of the world wars, as well as optimistic through the 1950s and 1960s economic boom. It was however during this period that the environmental concern gained a greater space in people's lives. The optimism witnessed in the post war decades fades, as it became evident during the 1970's that the growth and development boom didn't resolve the challenges in the underdeveloped world (Pisani, 2006). This prompted a paradigm shift in relation to development. On one side there was notion of conservation, while the other was development. As a means to address both issues, the term 'sustainable development' became a compromise. Politicized through the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in 1972 and the World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, the notion of sustainable development put the challenges of the environment and development on the agenda.

3.4 What is left unproblematic – where are the silences?

Taking the analysis into critical exploration, this section seeks to reflect upon the issues and perspectives that are silenced within the identified problem representation. While there is a lot of focus on the benefits of adhering to the international regimes with phrases such as "contributing to the harmonious development […]" and to "improve living standards along with high levels of protection of health and safety and of the environment", we should consider how the affiliation with intergovernmental institutions might impact the geopolitical situation in Georgia (Free Trade Agreement Between The EFTA States and Georgia, 2016). The Agreement is put forth as positive change, which aims to "fix" and "improve" the status quo, and similar deals have previously disregarded the complexities of the geopolitical situation. In order to get a better understanding of these dynamics, we may look at the example of the European integration process and the European Neighborhood Policies (ENP) and partnership with NATO.

3.4.1   The democracy-security nexus

Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on October 12, 2012, the European Union was seen as an exemplar in the work towards democracy, reconciliation and human rights in Europe. The Norwegian Nobel Committee stated in 2012,

> *The Norwegian Nobel Committee wishes to focus on what it sees as the EU's most important result: the successful struggle for peace and reconciliation and for democracy and human rights. The stabilizing part played by the EU has helped to transform most of Europe from a continent of war to a continent of peace. The work of the EU represents "fraternity between nations", and amounts to a form of 'peace congress' to which Alfred Nobel refers to as criteria for the Peace Prize in his 1895 will* (Den Norske Nobelkomite, 2012)

The appraisal from the Nobel Committee was focus on the EU's ability and aspiration for reconciliation, democracy and human rights. However, Nilsson and Silander argue that while the quest for peace through democracy have been praised by many, there are potentially some unexpected and undesired consequences of pushing the European agenda onto the neighboring countries. The European Commission launched the European Neighborhood Policy in 2004. As a consequence of the 2004 Enlargement, the European Union acquired a lot of new neighbors. Claiming to promote security and prosperity for its members, the enlargement posed some challenges, and the ENP was a response to this (European Commission, 2004). In the strategy paper from the establishment of the ENP published by the European Commission it states that, "the method proposed is, together with partner countries, to define a set of priorities, whose fulfilment will bring them closer to the European Union" (ibid.). The ENP was set up to govern the relations between EU and 16 of its closest neighbors to the south and the east. The Southern Partnership consisted of Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. Through the Eastern Partnership of the ENP, the European Union sought to deepen the relationship between its member states and its six Eastern neighbors: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Referred to as the 'Kantian vision', Nilsson and Silander argue that EU's objective of security through the norms and values of democracy and its processes in the European neighborhood has failed.

In relation to the ostensible norms and values, we can see that Georgia's pro-western foreign policy was initiated during the Shevardnadze administration. By joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1992) and the Partnership for Peace (1994), Georgia effectively marked its position in relation to Russia by approximating a pro-western stance with its foreign affairs. As stated in the framework document regarding the Partnership for Peace;

> *This partnership is established as an expression of a joint conviction that stability and security In the Euro-Atlantic area can be achieved only through cooperation and common action. Protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms and human rights, and safeguarding of freedom, justice and peace through democracy are shared values fundamental to the Partnership* (NATO, 1994).

This partnership marked the beginning of Georgia-NATO relations, and the pro-western orientation grew consistently from then on. With the goal of a full integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures, Georgia was moving farther away from Russian influence and dependence. In addition, becoming members of other international organizations such as the World Bank (1992), the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 1992), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Georgia (1992), GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (1997) and the WTO (2000), can be seen as a further step in Georgia's aspirations of a western-orientation (Sayin & Modebadze, 2014).

Returning to the ENP, this integration project arguably affected Georgia in relation to the geopolitical security. Following the Rose Revolution, which took place in Tbilisi 2003, as a response to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions and corrupt leadership, Georgia got a new leader. Accused of falsifying the parliamentary election in 2003, Shevardnadze was ousted by Saakashvili and his opposition party. As presidential elections were held in January 2004, Mikheil Saakashvili won with almost 97% of the votes (Sayin & Modebadze, 2014). The newly elected president Saakashvili quickly began several political and economic reforms. Furthermore, as Sayin and Modebadze contends, "He stands, in the eyes of Georgian urban society, for getting rid of bureaucracy, corruption and stagnation that have been a hangover from the Soviet era and for bringing Georgia into the European family" (Sayin & Modebadze, 2014, p. 247). In addition to working on domestic reforms, Saakashvili was determined to deepen the relations between Georgia and NATO and EU. Although much of Saakashvili's work pertained to domestic reforms, another pressing issue that had lain dormant emerged yet again. According to Nilsson and Silander, Georgia's relation to its two breakaway regions was the most challenging issue during the 2000s (Nilsson & Silander, 2016).

Supported by the majority of the political elite, Georgia's relation to the EU was strengthened through the establishment of the ENP and its subsequent Action plan of 2006. With aspirations in joining the EU structures, third states such as Georgia, certain conditions

need to be met. Research on EU's foreign policymaking have shown that while being open to all European states, membership is only provided if certain political and economic conditions are living up to the EU standards (Nilsson & Silander, 2016). The Copenhagen criteria of 1992 can be seen as the formalized conditions of the standards that need to be met. In addition to political and economic conditions, Nilsson and Silander points out that "the EU institutionalized the promotion of democracy through statements, communications, and declarations (ibid, p.48). Through the lens of social constructivism we can see how the ideas, identity and interaction influence the international system. With the belief of security through democratization processes, the EU persuades third countries through promises of partnerships and improved conditions. The ENP constituted such a partnership, with its objectives of promoting democratic governance, stability, security and development in the region. As stated in the ENP Strategy Paper;

> *The European Neighbourhood Policy's vision involves a ring of countries, sharing the EU's fundamental values and objectives, drawn into an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation to involve a significant measure of economic and political integration. This will bring enormous gains to all involved in terms of increased stability, security and well-being* (European Commission, 2004).

With a rather clear-cut notion of being either *in* or *out*, the EU is effectively reproducing the constructed threat that is in need to be addressed through 'security and stability'. Taking a constructivist stance, the meaning of security might differ between actors, particularly for those outside this structure (Collins, 2013). The notion of either being inside or outside of this constructed "ring" and how it affects the various actors is perhaps best understood by looking at those on the 'outside' of the structure. While the EU's ambition was to spread democratic reforms through the European neighborhood, it has been argued that this project failed and on the contrary to its ambition of stability actually intensified security challenges. According to Nilsson and Silander, the ENP and the EU's increased presence in the region created so much insecurity that it may be regarded as a factor precipitating the war against Russia in 2008. While Georgia sought political integration with Europe, Russia had geopolitical aspirations in the Caucasus. NATO promised, in the spring of 2008, Georgia future membership, and while the EU was launching the 'Eastern Partnership' with the goal of closer relations which aggravated Russia.

3.5 What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?

Continuing the critical analysis of the Agreement, this section aims to assess the effects that accompany the problem representation. Two different effects will be addressed here; the first pertains to the village of Gori, and the second pertains to the issue of farmers and the certificates of origin. As the previous chapter of the analysis revealed, the Agreement and similar deals focus mainly on the notion of 'improving' and 'fixing' various issues. However, as it became evident, these agreements sometimes bring adverse effects such as how the tense situation as between Georgia and Russia escalated into a full blown war between the two countries.

During a fieldtrip in October 2017 to Gori, a city along the South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) to Georgia, members of the community revealed some of their concerns of the status quo in the post-conflict region. The fieldtrip was organized as joint collaboration between Flinders University, Communications for Development and Caucasus Studies at Malmö University as part of a simulation game in conflict resolution. The conflict between the breakaway region of South Ossetia and Georgia set the scenario for the simulation. Moreover, the simulation particularly focused on the shifting ABL and how this affects the lives of those living on either side of the border, as well as how the various stakeholders involved viewed this issue. Both undergraduate and graduate students participated in the simulation game, as well as professors and lecturers who were part of the organizing team. Divided into groups, we represented various stakeholders such as the internally displaced persons (IDP's), the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons, International Committee of the Red Cross, local and international media and the Ministry of International Affairs. In addition, as part of the information and data for the simulation, we were provided with real and recent articles written by journalist covering the Russian-Georgian relations. NPR journalist Stephanie Joyce writes,

> *In the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains, 25000 feet up, Russia is steadily building what it says is a new international border. It's marked by a hodgepodge of barbed wire fences, large green signs, hastily dug trenches and well-manned checkpoints. Villages are divided by it and people are regularly thrown in jail for crossing it* (Joyce, 2017).

While the simulation game was fictional, it was based on true events, and much of the data provided was real reporting, such as this extract from Joyce's article on the tensions between Russia and Georgia and South Ossetia.

Located in the Georgian side, Gori is a city close to the ABL with South Ossetia. Unable to enter the territory of South Ossetia, Gori nonetheless provided us with interesting insights into the how the conflict played out, and more importantly how the people living there are affected by the decisions the governments and those in power take. The previous chapter of the analysis revealed how adverse effects of the problem representation have been silenced, and the notion of 'fixing' and 'responding' to what is perceived as problem becomes apparent. This also comes to light in the case of the 'frozen conflict' region of Gori. As argued in the previous section, the closer ties between Georgia and the EU intensified the security challenges, and led to military incidents between Georgia and South Ossetia. With inspiration from Kosovo's declaration of independence, both Abkhazia and South Ossetia proclaimed independence which was furthermore officially supported by Russia (Nilsson & Silander, 2016). According to the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission Report, Georgia was responsible for the initial aggression in the conflict as it launched an indiscriminate artillery barrage on the city of Tskhinvali, the regional capital of South Ossetia (IIFFMCG, 2009). The attack was a culmination of month of tensions, and Saakashvili furthermore claimed the offensive was aimed at halting Russian military units moving into South Ossetia. Whether there was an actual and immediate threat of a major attack was never verified. However, after Saakashvili's command to aggress in Tskhinvali, Russia did respond and Moscow furthermore justified its action as the report reads;

> *The Russian side justified their military intervention by their intention to stop an allegedly ongoing genocide of the Ossetian population by the Georgian forces, and also to protect Russian citizens residing in South Ossetia and the Russian contingent of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces deployed in South Ossetia* (IIFFMCG, 2009).

While the shelling of Tskhinvali marked the outbreak of the war, it progressed to other regions within South Ossetia, as well moving into Georgia proper well beyond South Ossetia. The village of Gori was shelled by Russian airstrikes as it was a strategic city in central Georgia with major military installations. Schools, apartment buildings and military barracks were destroyed during the hostilities, and the conflict left some 133.000 persons displaced within Georgia (IIFFMCG, 2009).

Brokered by French President Nikolas Sarkozy in his capacity as the French European Union presidency, Saakashvili and Medvedev signed a six-point ceasefire agreement on August 16. The agreement demanded a complete cessation of hostilities, but allowed Russian

peacekeeping forces to implement security measures until an international monitoring mechanism was deployed. Subsequently the European Union adopted a joint action plan to establish and deploy a European Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM Georgia) to ensure there was no resurgence of hostilities. Having expressed a grave concern for the hostilities, the European Council asserted its commitment to "support every effort to secure a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict" (Council Joint Action on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, 2008). After having received an official letter from the government of Georgia with an invitation to deploy a civilian monitoring mission in Georgia, the operational face began in October 2008.

Almost a decade after the initial deployment of the mission, the EUMM are still present in the region, and have been patrolling day and night particularly in the areas close to the ABL's to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. During our fieldtrip to Gori in October 2017, we attended a meeting with the Head of Mission in the EUMM field office. Also present at this meeting were the local residents of Gori, many of which are IDP's residing in the IDP settlement were the meeting was held. According to a report from the UNHCR, as of 2008 12,300 of the 212,000 IDP's in Georgia came from South Ossetia. Moreover the majority of these IDP's settled in Gori (UNHCR, 2009). While representatives from EUMM Georgia presented their mandate of ensuring no return of hostilities, facilitation of resumption to safe and normal life for local population, confidence building and informing about EU policy in Georgia and the wider region, it became clear that there was a general uncertainty among the local population as to why the EUMM were there. During a Q&A session, several of the local residents expressed their frustration regarding their living situation as IDP's, asking the EUMM representatives what they could do about the issue. The EUMM representatives on the other hand, responded with underlining their mandate as solely working with monitoring and reporting of violations of the six-point agreement. There was however, roaming a sense of uncertainty and confusion among the locals, regarding the EUMM's presence and purpose if they weren't actually able to help. Shifting ABL's and detentions of people crossing it were some of the stories that the locals shared with us during the meeting. They furthermore explained how they had reported incidents and have asked monitors in the field for help. However, being tied to their mandate of only monitoring and reporting, the EUMM are unable to help directly. One might question the efficiency of such a system; however their presence is an important mechanism to provide information to the policy makers.

The other effect of the problem representation pertains to the DCFTA related to farmers and their produce. As mentioned in the introduction, the DCFTA was set up to develop better opportunities for trade and economic growth. Moreover, the European Commission claims that the DCFTA will create not only economic integration with the EU, but also that the adoption of EU approaches to policy-making will improve governance and strengthen the rule of law. As argued in previous sections of the analysis, we can see that the adherence to these international regimes, whether it is trade, democracy, human rights or sustainable development, comes with a specific understanding of what is perceived as the right way or course of action. Some of the regulations in the DCFTA, that the EU view as important in relations to trade is the issue of origin. According to the DCFTA, in order to receive status of Georgian Origin for Export goods in the EU, certain conditions need to be fulfilled;

- The goods must be fully produced in Georgia; or
- The goods are not fully produced in Georgia, but the materials used for production have undergone sufficient processing on the territory of Georgia (dcfta.gov.ge, 2017).

These conditions are not as straight forward as they might seem however, as Georgia's borders are being challenged by the break-away regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Not recognized by the international community, the de facto government of these regions together with Russia holds a power over what is produced, and is determined as the place of origin. In order for exports to meet the EU standards, they need to have a Georgian certificate. If the Abkhaz farmers, who is producing about 10 % of Georgia's hazelnuts, wanted to export with a Georgian certificate, it would likely been seen as an act of betrayal towards the de facto Abkhazian government. According to Professor Alexandre Kukhianidze, who has done extensive work on security, corruption and organized crime and smuggling, explains that the DCFTA between Georgia and the EU have been quite efficient. However, despite some hopes that Abkhazians would express their interest to participate, this has not yet happened. The majority of the population in the Gali district of Abkhazia is mostly Georgian's, and although they would like to participate in the DCFTA, it is hindered by the Russians and the de facto Abkhaz government. Having closed all so called 'border' check points except from one, the Enguri Bridge between Gali and Zugdidi, the Russian FSB is effectively controlling the movement of goods and people across the ABL. Kukhianidze furthermore contends that Georgians are tired of trying to convince Abkhazians, and suggests that "Georgians should better be concentrated on their own agricultural projects and do maximum for EU integration"

(Kukhianidze, 2018). Georgia is continuing to focus on domestic reforms while building external relations with the EU.

3.6 How/where is this representation of the problem produced, disseminated and defended?

Directing attention to how and where this problem representation has been produced, disseminated and defended, we can surmise that the discourse of the various international regimes carry a strong influence and legitimacy. Treaties and agreements are results of international regimes that carry set of principles, norms and rules. While many of the agreements such as the EFTA Georgia Agreement and DCFTA between EU and Georgia are quite technical in terms of all of its provisions and with the target audience of politicians and government officials, other briefings and fact sheet are made available for the general public. This way, the various institutions are able to convey their desires and objectives in a simpler manner, with the underlying problem representations are transmitted simultaneously, and reaching out to an even broader audience.

An important factor to how the problem is reproduced and disseminated is in relation to funding allocations. Both the EFTA countries and the EU have provided financial support to obtain economic and political reforms in Georgia. In the draft ratification proposal put forth to the Norwegian Parliament regarding the FTA, attention was given to socio-political situation in Georgia. Norway budgeted in 2017, 60 million NOK in funding to support the consolidation of democracy, human rights and sustainable development (Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartement, 2016). The specific areas of support have developed throughout the years however. The humanitarian assistance provided for the IDP's after the conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia was receded as the Georgian government was gradually more able to provide assistance to the IDP's. In recent years, the main focus has been directed towards the promotion of the rule of law, democracy, human rights and energy, as well as promoting European cooperation. Similarly, we can see that the EU has supported Georgia as a partnership state. However, with the EU exclusive strategy towards their neighboring states, certain political and economic conditions have to be absorbed. According to Nilsson and Silander, the EU has utilized this form of conditional cooperation, giving incentives for states to democratize. Encouraging democracy, human rights and sustainable development became an integral part of EU's foreign policy, and the Copenhagen criteria of 1992 became the foundation of the enlargement process. The accession criteria relates to the stability of

institutions in relation to democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities; a functioning market economy; ability to implement rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law. As potential members or partners lived up to the conditions, the EU would increasingly provide support through diplomatic and financial means (Nilsson & Silander, 2016). Similarly, the Swiss Secretariat of Economic Affairs express that through the FTA between EFTA and Georgia, Switzerland will continue the policy of supporting economic reforms and integrating Georgia in economic cooperation structures on both a European and global level.

4. Conclusion

Taking into consideration a web policies, both historical and contemporary, this research set out to investigate why EFTA have pursued having free trade agreement with Georgia. By conducting the analysis using the WPR approach, we can conclude that the adherence to international regimes is the problem representation in the policies. Through analyzing the FTA between Georgia and EFTA, it became evident that there are particularly three international regimes that are predominant in this case. The first pertained to democratic principles. Here we could see that democracy is perceived as the correct form of governance, which is furthermore deeply rooted in western political thought and developed during the last centuries, into how we think of democracy today. The basic notion of a democratically governed society with representatives making decisions on behalf of those who have elected them becomes challenged, when the borders or boundaries of a society are disputed like in the issue of Georgia and its disputes with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The second regime pertained to the notion of human rights. With roots traced back to the Enlightenment and the United State Declaration of Independence, natural and human rights became an increasingly important aspect of modernity and much later formally institutionalized through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The third regime identified was sustainable development. After further scrutiny, we could see that organizations such as the OECD and United Nations institutionalize many of the rules, norms and principles that this regime represents. The ideas of sustainable development can be traced back to the pre-modern times, however it was particularly during and after the Industrial Revolution it became more linked to the supply of natural resources and the danger of material shortage. Moreover, the most commonly quoted definition of sustainable development is from the Brundtland Report from 1987.

The more critical section of the analysis disclosed that there were some aspects of the policy that was left unproblematic and silenced. It became evident that while focusing on how the policies are in place to 'fix' and 'improve' the situation, they can actually pose some adverse effects. These adverse effects were furthermore identified being the EU's and Georgia's increased integration into the EU and Euro-Atlantic structures. Claiming to promote security and prosperity, the western orientation nevertheless could be viewed as creating further instability as Russia has geopolitical aspiration in the region. The vision of creating a ring of countries around the EU were furthermore identified as an attempt of safeguarding the 'fundamental values and objectives', however the clear cut notion of being 'in' or 'outside' of this circle can be viewed as a constructed threat. Moreover, the perceived threat of Russia moving into South Ossetia led to the outbreak of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War in 2008. The other effect of the adherence to international regimes was in relation to production and the issue of origin. With the contested borders of Georgia, trade relations become entangled to the notion of sovereignty and power over territory and resources such as the hazelnuts of Abkhazia.

Finally, the analysis showed that by using the WPR approach to looking beyond the financial and material aspects of trade, EFTA's objective of having the FTA with Georgia is to promote the deep-seated values of democracy, human rights and sustainable development. As the analysis showed, through the lens of social constructivism, we can see that the actors aren't necessarily concerned with material aspects but the focus lies within the transmittance of ideas, values, beliefs and norms the various international institutions that have been discussed holds. It became evident that although having good intentions are valuable; it can in some instances have the opposite effect, as in the case of the EU, Georgia and Russia tensions.

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