



SCHOLARS
STRATEGY NETWORK

For Georgia, Ukraine's Near Neighbor, the War Feels Very Personal

Evangeline Linkous, University of South Florida-Main Campus

Ukraine is not the only nation whose borders have been breached by Russia's military. Vladimir Putin's troops invaded the Republic of Georgia in 2008. As a result, for my neighbors in Tbilisi, Georgia, my home for the past two months as I participate in the Fulbright U.S. Scholar program, Ukraine's struggles feel very personal.

The Russo-Georgian War took place just six months after NATO allies agreed that Georgia and Ukraine would be welcomed as members, recognizing the enormous strides made in both nations as they created democratic systems of governance after decades of Soviet rule. Twenty percent of Georgia's territory was occupied by Russia; the major cities of Tbilisi and Gori were bombed; more than a thousand died; an estimated 138,000 people were displaced, and the economy was left in turmoil just as Georgia was on the brink of hard-earned political stability