

# **Legal Grey Zone Exploitation and the Silent Displacement of a Population: Reframing Russia's Passportization Policy in Georgia's Breakaway Regions**

**Kakhaber Kalichava Ph.D**

History and International relations, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State university, Georgia

## **Abstract:**

This article examines Russia's "passportization policy" in Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, analyzing it as a strategic legal maneuver aimed at undermining Georgian sovereignty through non-military means. Moving beyond conventional analyses of naturalization as a humanitarian or identity-based act, the paper introduces two original concepts – legal grey zone exploitation and silent displacement through legal absorption – to explain how Russia has capitalized on Georgia's post-Soviet legal and institutional fragility. By issuing passports en masse to Georgian citizens residing in the contested territories, Russia displaced Georgian jurisdiction and redefined political allegiance without altering borders or deploying overt force. Drawing on international legal principles, Georgian domestic law, and Russian citizenship legislation, the analysis reveals a calculated manipulation of legal ambiguity and transitional periods to assert de facto sovereignty. The paper challenges the claim of statelessness among the local Abkhaz and Ossetian populations and highlights the disconnect between legislative intent and institutional capacity in early Georgian statehood. Through this Georgia-centered lens, the study offers an interpretation of passportization as a tool of hybrid legal warfare – one that blurs the boundaries of identity, legality, and territorial control. The findings have broader implications for understanding how extraterritorial citizenship policies can silently erode the foundations of state sovereignty under the guise of legality.