

**INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN GEORGIA:  
THE ABKHAZIAN AND SOUTH OSSETIAN CONFLICTS**

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*To my Parents*

*Manana Kobuladze & Sulkhan Kereselidze*

## **ABSTRACT**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia has turned into a scene of ethno-political conflicts. In both cases of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts agreements were reached without final political settlement. International engagement has been extensive, however with respect to external factors, it is still unclear how this involvement has influenced the course of the peace process. In order to highlight the variation of degrees of success of the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts and to identify the general impact of such involvement, the aim of my research is to examine the factors that facilitated or impeded external conflict resolution. I argue that regional security/stability is a key determinant of mediation success. In developing this argument, I examine the impact of Russian intervention in both conflicts and in order to better show that the involvement of the third party regional power impedes the international mediation process I will examine the comparative case of international involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In conclusion, I suggest that international mediation is unlikely to be successful if the meddling third party has interests in prolongation of the disputes.

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## INTRODUCTION

The South Caucasus is one of the most diverse regions in the post Soviet area fragmented with ethno-political conflicts. It includes three conflict zones – Abkhazia, Southern Ossetia<sup>1</sup> and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as numerous disputes among the ethnic minorities within it. An earlier generation of Soviet leaders created the basis for current ethnic confrontations through resettlement of various ethnic groups and by artificially drawing administrative boundaries within the union. Since the collapse of the USSR, the region has turned into a scene of ethnonationalism and ethnopolitical conflicts. In all three cases of the South Caucasus conflicts, ceasefire agreements were reached without final political settlement, turning the region into an area of frozen conflicts. The conflicts have had a serious impact on the overall political, economic and social situation in Georgia. The regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia enjoyed autonomous status before the war erupted. The existence of autonomous institutions laid the foundations for secessionist movements which have led to violent confrontation with the Georgian central government. Embedded political, social and cultural differences made the Abkhazi war different from the South Ossetian war, which was the product of a prolonged disputed territorial conflict. Georgia has attracted increasing international attention, and much effort has been directed to conflict resolution in the former Soviet state.

It is widely debated whether international involvement in both conflicts in Georgia in fact had a positive peacemaking impact. In order to demonstrate the variation of degrees of success of the UN and OSCE in the Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts and to identify the general impact of such involvement, the aim of my research is to examine the factors that facilitated or impeded external conflict resolution in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. With respect to external factors, it is still unclear how involvement of international organizations has influenced the course of these conflicts. In order to answer these questions, the first chapter of this thesis presents the theoretical framework of conflict resolution, and mediation in particular. I would argue that the existing theories of conflict management through international involvement are

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<sup>1</sup> Although the term “South Ossetia” is repudiated by the Georgian academics and politicians (Aleksander Rusetski, Seminar, International Students Forum Kobuleti 2006, July 22, 2006) because it underlines the northern and southern parts of Ossetia, that comes into conflict with the fact that Southern Ossetia is an integral part of Georgia; Nevertheless, I refrain from using the term “Tskhinvali region” because South Ossetia is widely used.

insufficient for explaining the unique failures of the UN and OSCE in managing these ethnic crises. I attempt to derive general principles of successful international mediation from the history of external intervention in these two conflicts. In this respect, I will analyze the extent to which international involvement helped solve the conflicts between the Georgians and Abkhazis, on the one hand, and the Georgians and South Ossetians on the other.

I argue that the overall failure of international engagement in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts can be attributed to their efforts to refrain from antagonizing the regional power, Russia. In developing this argument, the third chapter examines the impact of Russian intervention in both conflicts. Before this, the second chapter presents the background of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts and determines its causes and differences. Georgia has suffered „Russian interference in its domestic affairs, with varying degrees of overt Russian support for the rebellious minorities.”<sup>2</sup> Georgia accepted the Russian „peacekeeping” forces in its territory under pressure from Moscow, however, these peacekeepers appear to support separatist authorities. Russia’s interventions are destabilizing these regions, and therefore prolonging the overall conflict. As Erin Jenne puts it, „separatist minorities are unlikely to negotiate a settlement with the center so long as they enjoy significant external backing or cross-border support.”<sup>3</sup> The fourth chapter gives an overview of UN and OSCE activities to resolve the Georgian conflicts under their respective mandates. It discusses that the mediation efforts had more observing and assistance character supplemented by humanitarian assistance schemes more targeted to the conflict stabilization rather than political solution. The chapter identifies the factors that help explain the successes as well as the failures of external mediation in the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts. One factor has to do with how the involvement came about in the first place in the two cases.

The international involvement in the South Caucasus could be divided in three stages: the first stage from 1991 to 1994 with Russian interference leading to the ceasefire agreements and relative cautious approach from the side of international community. The second stage – over the period of 1994 and 1997, with active participation of the international organizations both in terms of conflict mediation and general support; and the third stage from 1997 up to

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<sup>2</sup> Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: a Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (England: Curzon, 2001), 143.

<sup>3</sup> Erin K. Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: the Paradox of Minority Empowerment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 196.

2008 which could be characterized with status quo in mediation efforts and realization of the central governments the obvious failure of the mediation process.

The UN has played various roles during the conflict and peace process: diplomatic negotiations through the Security Council and a subsequent military role through the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG); a humanitarian role through United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA); a development role through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and a human rights role with the Human Rights Office (HRO) under the UNCHR. The OSCE has engaged in dialogue with officials and civil society representatives in Abkhazia, especially from NGOs and the media, regarding human dimension standards. However, at the UN General Assembly in September 2007, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili critically stated that the UN and OSCE as “security actors and guardians of international law”<sup>4</sup> failed to contribute to peaceful resolution of the Abkhazi and South Ossetian conflicts after more than a decade.

### ***Contribution and Importance***

Researching international engagement in the Abkhazi and South Ossetian conflicts provides deep insights into the nature of the conflict management in Georgian and the region at large. Georgia's foreign policy and friendly relations with neighboring countries emphasizes its potential for promoting peace in the South Caucasus. Georgia has launched several peace initiatives for resolving these conflicts and engaging in mutual cooperation. Also, the very stability of Georgia is an important condition for peace in the entire Caucasus.<sup>5</sup> The international community gives high priority to the promotion of peace in Georgia, therefore international organizations are increasingly contributing to the mediation process in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and supporting the county's own initiatives to promote regional cooperation. Thus, given the seriousness and intensity of international engagement in

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<sup>4</sup> Eurasia Daily Monitor, “Saakashvili at UN: International Organizations failing on Post-Soviet Conflict Resolution”, Vladimir Socor, October 1, 2007, [http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article\\_id=2372464](http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2372464).

<sup>5</sup> Archil Gegeshidze, „Georgia: In Quest of a Niche Strategy”, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and Security Studies, <http://www.gfsis.org/pub/eng/security.php>.



Georgia, an assessment of the effects of this engagement would contribute to an understanding as to what international organizations can accomplish when they are seriously committed to resolving an internal conflict. This, then, could serve as a useful guide towards policy formation. Observing that no in-depth analysis has thus far been conducted on the patterns of success or failure of external mediation in either conflicts, I hope to contribute to the construction of a more nuanced theoretical understanding of the determinants of third party mediation success, helping to rethink the mediation and peacekeeping formats of international organizations both in the former Soviet Union (fSU) and more generally. Furthermore, studying the dynamics and causes of these conflicts is important for understanding the extent to which it is possible for the Georgians and Abkhazis, and the Georgians and South Ossetians, to rebuild broken social bridges through the reconciliation-facilitating activities of international organizations.

## ***Methodology***

In order to answer the question posed in the thesis, I use a comparative case study design. Specifically, I will use a controlled comparative analysis to assess the causes of variation in the success of mediation efforts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict cases. I will examine the activities of the UN and the OSCE mission in Georgia in the conflict zones by reviewing the primary material – resolutions, legal mandates and the guiding formats of those organizations. In order to determine what they were expected to do, and to what extent they managed to fulfill their mandates using their own criteria, I will review their own publications and reports. In this respect, it is revealing to trace the circumstances under which the mandates of the missions changed. I will explore the effectiveness of efforts undertaken by the UN to promote lasting peace in Abkhazia and in promoting the return of the IDPs. The thesis will demonstrate that the international organizations fulfilled their commitments under their mandates, but to a greater or lesser extent failed to resolve the actual conflicts. In addition, I will research the respective literature on conflict management studies which offer the theory of mediation.

## Chapter 1: International Engagement – Method of Ethnic/National Conflict Mediation

There is a wide debate over the methods of conflict resolution, and the literature on this issue proposes different approaches to settling ethnic/national, regional and global conflicts. The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate that the review of this literature shows heterogeneity and complexity of the conflict resolution methods. Kaufmann believes that, when identity conflicts are very bloody, separation of the opposing groups into defensible enclaves ensures lasting peace, because mutual fears and hostilities from the war make it impossible for the two sides to live with one another in a common state.<sup>6</sup> Although territorial partition could decrease the likelihood of ethnic clashes, on the other hand first, subsequent population transfer would lead to loss of life and second, separation could transform the local conflict into inter-state wars.<sup>7</sup> In addition, partition could generate ethnic isolation and estrangement that could affect the reconciliation process.

Liphart disagrees with partition method and proposes a power-sharing approach to resolving ethnic divisions in post-conflict societies, arguing that only when the warring groups have a stake in the central government, as well as extensive autonomy over their own regions, can ethnically divided societies function effectively.<sup>8</sup> However, this proposition might not be acceptable to the conflicting parties because, for example, the system fails to generate an equitable division of state resources between the groups. In the cases of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, granting autonomy may not resolve their ethnic grievances, because all three of them enjoyed the autonomous status before the crises started. Presently, the central governments are proposing returning to them the autonomous status. However, the secessionist republics refuse this renewed solution because the only acceptable solution for them is full independence and international recognition. Independence in its turn poses threats to the territorial integrity of Georgia and Azerbaijan because it creates opportunities for these regions to form federal structures with their ethnic kin in Russia and in Armenia.

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<sup>6</sup> Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown et. al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 445.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Erin K. Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: the Paradox of Minority Empowerment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 187.

<sup>8</sup> Arendt Liphart, "The Power Sharing Approach", in *Conflict and Peacekeeping in Multiethnic Societies*, ed. Joseph Montville (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990), 491 – 509.

Other authors hold that third party intervention and international mediation *can* manage inter-ethnic relations after internal wars. The literature on conflict mediation expanded considerably after the post-Cold War years and with emerging violent conflicts in Eurasia in 1990s. This chapter examines whether international mediation is an effective solution to internal conflicts, and, if so, what conditions favor the success of international mediation. In the conclusion, it suggests that because of the internal contradictions in the institutional features of international organizations, the character of mediation itself, political and economic conditions on the ground, and other contextual factors, international mediation does not always turn out to be successful.

The use of third-party intervention in conflicts as a way of dealing with disputes grows each year. An overview of recent international disputes shows the extent and heterogeneity of mediation; however, systematic analysis of mediation is rare<sup>9</sup>. According to Jacob Bercovitch and Allison Houston mediation is “an extension of the negotiation process whereby an acceptable third party intervenes to change the course or outcome of a particular conflict”, and assists to find a mutually acceptable agreement.<sup>10</sup> A central condition for mediation success is carefully conducted negotiation process itself as an extension of the parties’ own conflict management efforts.<sup>11</sup> While bringing the motives of the mediators, Bercovitch states that they may see the engagement opportunity “as a way of extending and enhancing their influence by becoming indispensable to their parties in dispute, or by gaining the gratitude (and presumably political allegiance) of one or both protagonists.”<sup>12</sup> This motive was true for the Russian engagement in Georgian conflicts because after full independence and recognition of Abkhazia its incorporation into the Russian Federation is highly likely and similarly independence of South Ossetia would entail its inclusion into North Ossetia with automatic incorporation into Russia. In addition, according to Bercovitch “effectively mediated outcome is a stable and realistic outcome.”<sup>13</sup> In case of the UN and OSCE stability was defined in their mandates as cessation of violence; nevertheless, because the break-away

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<sup>9</sup> Jacob Bercovitch and Allison Houston, “The Study of International Mediation: Theoretical Issues and Empirical Evidence,” in *Resolving the International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>11</sup> Jacob Bercovitch, “The Structure and Diversity of Mediation in International Relations” in *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple approaches to Conflict Management*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, (London : Macmillan, 1992), 1 – 29.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

regions are not recognized as independent states their de facto independence can not be considered realistic.

According to Christopher Moore, the mediator assists disputing parties to find a mutually acceptable settlement.<sup>14</sup> Mediation is thus seen as an ongoing process starting with pre-mediation and continuing to the post-mediation monitoring phase where an important factor determining mediation success is reaching mutual understanding and an acceptable solution. But I believe that if the underlying principle of mediation – finding a solution acceptable to all sides of a dispute cannot be found, then the mediation approach alone might fail in the early stage of implementation. Thus, as the media have noted with the Abkhazi conflict, “UN efforts to mediate have got nowhere” with “no sign that a way out of this volatile impasse will soon be found.”<sup>15</sup> Also, mediation can be effective if the parties enjoy equal power relations and in case of asymmetric relations the mediator may be expected to balance their powers.<sup>16</sup> In this respect, the UN involvement in Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh cases turned out to be relatively unsuccessful because the UN failed to balance the powers of the conflicting groups, while the third party Russia was backing one of the belligerent sides.

In her theory of ethnic bargaining, Erin Jenne observes that nationalist conflicts, often taking the form of a “territorially concentrated minority”, often entail one or more external actors providing assistance to the revolting minority.<sup>17</sup> Also, minority mobilization is an important prerequisite for ethnic conflict, which was true for all the three South Caucasus conflicts. She argues that policies aimed at addressing economic disparities will not de-radicalize minority movements so long as the minorities are receiving external support for their resistance.<sup>18</sup> When it comes to external mediation, she argues that successful third party interventions should be carried out by major powers because of their credentials and inducements at their disposal.”<sup>19</sup> Through assistance packages, government agreements, or trade preferences, great

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<sup>14</sup> Christopher Moore, *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 15.

<sup>15</sup> BBC News, “Regions and Territories: Abkhazia,” March 5, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3261059.stm>.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Moore, *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Erin K. Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: the Paradox of Minority Empowerment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 38.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

powers can create strong incentives for the both parities to cooperate.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, “mediators are more likely to succeed when they do not have a dog in the fight”<sup>21</sup> and should not have affinities to either opposing party.

Through analyzing the Nagorno-Karabakh and Georgia-Abkhazia conflicts, Anthony Baird suggests a conflict resolution theory that considers “the unique nature of modern ethnic conflict.”<sup>22</sup> According to him, successful conflict mediation must deal with ethnic conflict not only on the basis of its causes – ethnonationalism, but taking into account the nature of the conflict itself. He describes the “unique nature” as an aggregate of collective fears and the resultant ethnonationalism that consists of four aspects to which the conflict resolution must be aimed: symbolic “identity” nature, value-related conflicts, mass participation, and lack of central control. While discussing these types of mediation, he examines the most traditional method “power-based mediation,” when “the third state uses its power to compel the warring sides to find a mutually acceptable negotiated settlement.”<sup>23</sup> Even though considering the power-based mediation implies that the states are unitary actors in international relations able to manage the conflicts, the influence of the strong states can result in a peace settlement. The involvement of Russia in the Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts was an exemplification of the power-based mediation. However although the ceasefire agreements were reached, a political solution has not been found and obviously this engagement was not successful because of the partial interests of Russia. Thus, “power to influence a settlement rests on another weakness – lack of neutrality.”<sup>24</sup> To this respect, in the milieu of the power-based mediation it becomes difficult for the institutional mediation where the members of the international organizations are the mediating powerful parties to achieve resolution acceptable for the conflicting sides. State-based mediation is nearly always aimed at achieving a political settlement and afterwards no efforts are made to resolve the underlying conflict.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, as Baird notes, many policymakers and scholars view

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<sup>20</sup> Erin K. Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: the Paradox of Minority Empowerment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 190.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony Baird, “An Atmosphere of Reconciliation: A Theory of Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Based on the Transcaucasian Conflicts,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 2.4 (1999), [http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2\\_4baird.htm](http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2_4baird.htm).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

power-based mediation as the most effective form of third-party intervention, because credibility is more important than neutrality.

Within the presented different theories concerning causes of intervention success I, however, argue that regional security/stability is a key determinant of mediation success that may override the importance of these other factors. Thus, when the region is unstable, or when the minority receives external support for rebellion, then no amount of mediation is likely to resolve the conflict. I consider that the potential success of external mediation cannot be determined without regarding the context of the conflict itself, which will determine whether international involvement in the form might be productive. In this respect, although Bercovitch and Houston, while listing the ways in which mediators can facilitate the resolution of a conflict, note the importance of contextual factors: “mediation is likely to occur when ... both parties welcome some form of mediation and are ready to engage in direct or indirect dialogue,”<sup>26</sup> the likelihood of conflict resolution does not always depend largely on getting the parties to compromise and offer concessions. In the case of Abkhazia, while the Georgian government opposes granting the region’s independence and demands that the break-away territories be reincorporated into the state, the Abkhazis completely reject this proposition and insist that there can be no agreement until Georgia recognizes its independence. Negotiations seeking political solutions both for Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been conducted with Russian involvement and international engagement. Nevertheless, mediation toward a permanent peace settlement made little progress. As Cornell puts it, these engagements were not fully successful to the extent that they only “reaffirm the deadlocked, incompatible positions of the parties.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, the mutually accepted agreement turns out to have been very difficult to implement.

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Jacob Bercovitch and Allison Houston, “The Study of International Mediation: Theoretical Issues and Empirical Evidence,” in *Resolving the International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 12.

<sup>27</sup> Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: a Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (England: Curzon, 2001), 44.

## Chapter 2: Background of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian Conflicts

### 2.1. Abkhazia

The South Caucasus conflicts despite their specific character are significantly similar with respect of their immediate causes and courses of the settlement. The principal issue at stake for the conflicts is the status of the regions and territorial control. During the independence movement from the Soviet Union, the three autonomous regions Abkhazia, South Ossetia in Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan revolted against central governments. In the early days of independence gained on April 9 1990, political turmoil, nationalistic incentives, separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and involvement of the regional power has led the country to the civil war. In order to provide an insight into the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts, this chapter presents the background of the ethnic tensions.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union led the former Soviet Republic of Georgia into political unrest and civil war. While Georgia had been part of the USSR since 1921, the Soviet authority used the policy of territorial division into ethnic units towards Georgia. The conflict in Abkhazia, which is strategically situated in the northwestern Georgia on the Black Sea has its roots in the 1930s. Before being subjugated to Georgia in 1931, Abkhazia had the union republic status (SSR) “in a treaty relationship with Georgia.”<sup>28</sup> Abkhazia was granted the autonomous republic status outside the Georgian SSR, however it gradually changed into a status within Georgia. As for the social relations, the ancestors of Abkhazis were making up the part of ancient Georgian kingdoms, and the Abkhazis shared the same Christian Orthodox religion with Georgians, however because of the ambivalent relationship, they have not been fully assimilated into the Georgian culture and nationality. Because the Abkhazis feared that their ethnic identity was threatened with extinction, they repeatedly petitioned Moscow to change the status of Abkhazia. At that time, the centre repressed the expression of nationalism but after Gorbachov’s perestroika of the late 1980s “collective fear and the freedom to form autonomous ethnic movements gave new life to the expression of Abkhazian

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<sup>28</sup> Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: a Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (England: Curzon, 2001), 43.

consternation.”<sup>29</sup> The demonstrations began in Georgia after 30,000 citizens of Abkhazia issued a petition to Moscow in March 1989 stipulating the desire to secede from Georgia,<sup>30</sup> evoking their short-lived independence of 1925 constitution under which Abkhazia was separate from Georgia; this sparked hostilities between Sokhumi and Tbilisi. The demonstrations in Tbilisi mainly aimed to obtain independence from Russia reflected upsurge of nationalism and anti-Abkhazian declarations. Nationalist forces headed by independence movement leader and the first president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia that came to power exacerbated the situation by “taking a more aggressive stand towards the minorities and autonomous regions in the country.”<sup>31</sup> By that time, after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, less than five percent of the population of Abkhazia was ethnic Abkhazi and the rest composed largely of Georgians.<sup>32</sup> After Georgia proclaimed independence with no autonomous regions in 1991, the Abkhazian Supreme Soviet voted to return to the 1925 constitution in July 1992. In order to secure the border with Russia and protect Georgian rail and road supply lines, the Georgian National Guard was sent to in August 1992 after which the government retreated from Sokhumi.<sup>33</sup> At the outbreak of the war, first the UN sent its fact-finding mission in 1992, and from 1993 until 1997 the Swiss ambassador Eduard Brunner was sent in as a “Special Envoy” of the UN Secretary General to Georgia mainly with the same mission.<sup>34</sup> The war continued until 1993 where the North Caucasian fighters and Russian political and military provided support to Abkhazis. During the offensive on October 1, 1992 which led to the establishment of Abkhazi control over Abkhazi-Russian border, the Abkhazis were armed with military equipment T-72 tanks, Grad rocket launchers, supplied with 100,000 landmines and employing air force for Sokhumi bombardment that they had not possessed before. This heavy arsenal appearing from nowhere was the first cause of suspicion from the Georgian side that Russians were assisting the secessionist side.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Anthony Baird, “An Atmosphere of Reconciliation: A Theory of Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Based on the Transcaucasian Conflicts,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 2.4 (1999), [http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2\\_4baird.htm](http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2_4baird.htm).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Natalie Sabanadze, “International Involvement in the South Caucasus”, ECMI Working Paper # 15, February 2002, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), 2002, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> BBC News, “Regions and Territories: Abkhazia,” March 5, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3261059.stm>.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Online Library of Congress, *Georgia: A Country Study*, ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/georgia/19.htm>.

<sup>34</sup> Natalie Sabanadze, “International Involvement in the South Caucasus”, ECMI Working Paper # 15, February 2002, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), 2002, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: a Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (England: Curzon, 2001), 171.



The Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement was reached at the tripartite meeting of the Republic of Georgia, the leadership of Abkhazia and the Russian Federation on September 3, 1992 in Moscow. The agreement created the basis for a peace settlement and stipulated that "the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia shall be ensured".<sup>36</sup> However, the situation remained extremely tense with extensive ceasefire violations. During the resumed fighting which started on October 1, 1992, the Abkhazi forces captured the major towns of Abkhazia and forced nearly 30,000 civilians to flee. Seeking to restore the peace process by diplomatic means, to assist in the peacemaking incentives of the Secretary-General and to ensure effective coordination of actions in cooperation with the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the UN established its office in Tbilisi in November 1992 and the Secretary-General appointed a Special Envoy for Georgia in May 1993.<sup>37</sup> After several months, a new agreement reestablishing a ceasefire was signed between the two sides in Gudauta in July 27, 1993 and the UN advance team, comprised of 10 UN military observers incorporated in the international observer group, was deployed on August 8, 1993 establishing its headquarters in Sokhumi. After the second ceasefire breakdown on September 16, 1993, Abkhazi forces, with armed support from outside Abkhazia attacked Sokhumi and Ochamchire.<sup>38</sup> War continued in spite of the condemnation of the violation of the ceasefire by the Abkhazi side from the Security Council. On September 27, the Abkhazis occupied Sokhumi and after several days the entire population of Abkhazia (hundreds of thousands of people, mostly Georgians) were displaced. Following the breakdown of the ceasefire, further deployment of the UNOMIG was suspended and the Mission was granted an interim mandate. On May 14, 1994, after several rounds of complex negotiations chaired by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, the Georgian and Abkhazi sides signed "the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces" in Moscow. Georgia entered the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and signed an agreement on military bases under which the CIS peacekeeping forces (primarily consisting of Russian units) would be deployed to guard a demilitarized zone along the Enguri River. This served as a buffer zone through which the CIS, along with the UNOMIG, was to monitor implementation of the agreement and observe the CIS force operation.

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<sup>36</sup> UNOMIG, Georgia – UNOMIG – Background, <http://www.un.org/depts/dpko/missions/unomig/background.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Peacemaking within the CIS had to play an important role; however, even though as a result of the CIS peacemaking efforts, fighting activities were stopped, these efforts were not enough for the opposing parties to refrain from the use of force. As Alexander Yegorov concludes in his research, there were various reasons why the peacekeeping was ineffective: insufficient experience, complexity of disputes with the interests of many parties and political groups, economic crisis and intrastate political instability within the CIS states, as well as incapability of Russia and the CIS, as a whole, to conduct effective peacemaking policy.<sup>39</sup> Although Russia interference made it possible to stop conflict escalation in the CIS conflict zones, this interference was not sufficient “to set up prerequisites for their settlement by way of negotiations.”<sup>40</sup> As the Abkhazia crisis gained increased international attention, a group of countries under the aegis of the UN formed the “Friends of Georgia” in 1996, under which the USA, the UK, Germany, France and Russia sought an acceptable solution for both parties. The character and the difficulties this group faced were similar to that of the Minsk Group in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, due to the fact that Georgia and Azerbaijan were skeptical about Russia's commitment to the peace process, which made it hard to find a common ground not only among the conflicting sides, but also among the mediators.<sup>41</sup> Thus, despite these steps, little substantial progress was made on the critical issues of the negotiations, leaving the Georgian-Abkhaz peace process stalled.<sup>42</sup> By 1997, the group was renamed “Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia” and their activity decreased.

In July 1997 as Russia launching its activity and a UN high-level meeting was set in July, some improvement could be observed in the efforts to reach a political settlement, however, the meeting did not bring about clear results and subsequent cooperation.<sup>43</sup> In 1998 the situation deteriorated considerably due to the criminal and partisan activities mainly in the Gali region with raiding up to 90% of houses and inflicting \$2 million of UNHCR funds for

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<sup>39</sup> Alexander Yegorov, “*Collective Security System of the CIS States and Measures Providing Peace on the Territory of the Former Soviet Union*”, NATO Individual Democratic Institutions Research Fellowships (1994-1996) Report, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/94-96/yegorov/05.htm#5-5>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Natalie Sabanadze, “International Involvement in the South Caucasus”, ECMI Working Paper # 15, February 2002, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), 2002, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> UNOMIG, Georgia – UNOMIG – Background, <http://www.un.org/depts/dpko/missions/unomig/background.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Susan Stewart, “The Role of the United Nations in the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict,” *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues*, The Mannheim Centre for European Social Research, University of Mannheim: Germany, Issue 2/2003: 16.

rehabilitation.<sup>44</sup> Neither the Athens and Istanbul conferences in 1998 and 1999, and the Yalta Meeting in 2001 were not in fact quite successful in bilateral contacts promotion, despite the fact that the latter one included 15 confidence-building measures implementation commitments. Georgia's relations with Russia over Abkhazia deteriorated as in 2001 the parliament of Georgia adopted a resolution to change the Commonwealth of Independent States Peace Keeping Force (CISPKF) with an international peacekeepers<sup>45</sup>, following the circumstance that the Abkhazian side suggested a closer association of Abkhazia with Russia. Afterwards, in April 2002 the CISPKF deployed troops and heavy equipment on the zone without informing UNOMIG.<sup>46</sup>

Since the war, Abkhazia has been isolated from Georgia and extending its political ties with Russia through receiving Russian citizenship. Abkhazia also cooperates with the successions government of South Ossetia. An economic embargo from Abkhazian side to Georgia remains in force while Abkhazia has deepened its trade and commerce with Russia. In 2008 President Saakashvili suggested a series of proposals for conflict resolution, including a joint free economic zone and considerable Abkhazi representation in central government.<sup>47</sup> Today, a political resolution to the conflict has still not been reached, and Abkhazia is still demanding full independence, although ethnic Abkhazis comprised only 17 per cent of the total population even before the eviction of their Georgian neighbors.<sup>48</sup> Georgia has offered an autonomous status to Abkhazia in an asymmetric federation and refuses to negotiate on Abkhazia's status without a prior return of Georgian refugees.

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<sup>44</sup> Susan Stewart, "The Role of the United Nations in the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues*, The Mannheim Centre for European Social Research, University of Mannheim: Germany, Issue 2/2003: 17.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General Concerning the Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, S/2001/1008, October, 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Susan Stewart, "The Role of the United Nations in the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues*, The Mannheim Centre for European Social Research, University of Mannheim: Germany, Issue 2/2003: 21.

<sup>47</sup> Civil Georgia, Politics, "Saakashvili Outlines Tbilisi's Abkhaz Initiatives," March 28, 2008, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=17473>.

<sup>48</sup> Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", ECMI Working Paper # 15, February 2002, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), 2002, p. 13.

## 2.2. South Ossetian Conflict

During the Soviet period, one of the dispute areas was South Ossetia, an autonomous region within Georgia and the scene of a bloody conflict in the period 1989 – 1992. According to the 1989 census, Ossetians accounted for nearly two-thirds (66.61%) of the population and Georgians the other third (29.44%) in South Ossetia.<sup>49</sup> The two groups share a similar religion, while Ossetians practice pagan elements; as for the languages, they differ from each other – while Georgian is a subgroup of the Caucasian language group and Ossetian belongs to the Indo-European group related to Iranian (Farsi) using the Cyrillic with Ossetian modifications.<sup>50</sup> During the Soviet Union, Georgian was the official state language there and the minority languages had equal status. According to a treaty of friendship signed between Georgia and Russia of 1920, Russia recognized South Ossetia as an integral part of Georgia. The first tensions rose in 1988 as South Ossetia demanded changing the status from Autonomous Region (Oblast) to the Autonomous Republic. In the spring of 1989, Alan Chochiev, the leader of South Ossetian Popular Front Ademon Nykhas, supported the Abkhazian campaign against the opening of a Georgian branch of Tbilisi University in Sokhumi that deteriorated the situation. On 26 May, at the anniversary of Georgia's 1918 independence declaration, clashes between irregular groups of Georgians headed by Zviad Gamsakhurdia and local Ossetians took place.<sup>51</sup> This was a noteworthy example of majority-minority bargaining leading to minority radicalization against the centre since a particular demand was advanced against the centre by a political leader having popular support within the minority enclave.<sup>52</sup> In addition, according to Jenne's argument, radicalization happens mainly when minorities perceive that they have greater power against the center. Thus, the Ossetian minority availed the opportunity that the Georgian state was weakening at the time, gaining relatively greater leverage against the central government.

The massive nationalist turmoil overwhelmed the country in 1990 as South Ossetian officials sent a petition to Moscow requesting the unification of North and South Ossetians. Gamsakhurdia organized a "march on Tskhinvali" to "defend the Georgian population" that

<sup>49</sup> N. Cvetkovski, "The Georgian - South Ossetian Conflict" (PhD. diss., Aalborg University), chapter 4, Danish Association for Research on the Caucasus, <http://www.caucasus.dk/chapter4.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Erin K. Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: the Paradox of Minority Empowerment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 40.

was prevented from entering the city.<sup>53</sup> On 20 September 1990, the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast declared independence and on January 5, 1991 Georgian troops entered Tskhinvali. The fighting escalated in spring of 1992 with sporadic Russian involvement. The Russian-led three-sided peace-keeping operation started on July 14, 1992 by the Yeltsin administration, leading to cease-fire mediation. The cease-fire was enforced by the Georgian and Ossetian troops together with the six Russian battalions. It was in force throughout early 1994 despite the fact that in July 1993, the South Ossetian government announced that negotiations were over and threatened to resume large-scale combat.<sup>54</sup> Later in June 1994, the CSCE initiated a dialogue between Georgia and South Ossetia in North Ossetia. It should also be mentioned that after the ceasefire agreement Russia has not hindered the return of refugees which led to the relative stabilization. Till 1998 with assistance of the UNHCR and the Norwegian Council of Refugees 800 families returned to the conflict zone.<sup>55</sup> On December 15, 1999 the OSCE mandate was extended to include border monitoring.<sup>56</sup>

After the relative stability over five years the frozen conflict became at the edge of the resumed fighting as in August 2004 President Saakashvili in order to restore county's territorial integrity and undermine the secessionist regime launched incursion in Tskhinvali. At that military action there were mainly sent the US-trained Georgian Commando Battalion members. Because the advance was seriously miscalculated,<sup>57</sup> after the armed operations the Georgian side retreated. Since 2007 a new and relatively efficient approach to conflict resolution from the center's side can be observed. Parallel to the de facto South Ossetian leader Kokoity, Tbilisi initiated alternative provisional government with leader Dimitri Sanakoyev in 2007 as a way of rehabilitating Georgian-controlled villages around Tskhinvali. At the same time Tbilisi requested reforming the current mediation format where peacekeepers are comprised of the Russian, South Ossetian, North Ossetian and Georgian

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<sup>53</sup> Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", ECMI Working Paper # 15, February 2002, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), 2002, p. 15.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Online Library of Congress, *Georgia: A Country Study*, ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/georgia/19.htm>.

<sup>55</sup> Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", ECMI Working Paper # 15, February 2002, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), 2002, p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> OSCE Permanent Council, PC Journal No. 262, Agenda item 4, PC.DEC/334, December 15, 1999.

<sup>57</sup> See International Crisis Group, "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia", Europe Report N°159, November 26, 2004. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=3128>.

components.<sup>58</sup> Russia has been supporting the secessionist region through granting Russian citizenship to the most of the residents of South Ossetia and taking other measures to effectively take control of the regions without formally recognizing them.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the illegal trade with Russia and uncontrolled movement of goods benefited all sides.<sup>60</sup> Even before international recognition of Kosovo's independence from Serbia in 2008, Russian officials have been insisting on a "Kosovo precedent" arguing that "Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's cases for independence are more legitimate than Kosovo's, and so must perforce be granted if Kosovo's is."<sup>61</sup> As president Putin stated on January 31, 2006 for finding common principles beneficial for all the conflicting sides, "[If] people believe that Kosovo can be granted full independence, why then should we deny it to Abkhazia and South Ossetia?"<sup>62</sup> This policy approach deteriorates the Russian – Georgian relations.

### **2.3. The Nagorno – Karabakh Conflict**

The modern conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh takes its roots from the Soviet period. It has been a disputed region over centuries and the decision to keep the territory within the Azerbaijan SSR and grant broad regional autonomy was taken by the Caucasian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia in 1921. The first confrontation erupted in late 1980s after Gorbachev's *perestroika* as the Armenian minority in Karabakh considered an appropriate time for the unification of the territory to Armenia on December 1, 1989 once the Armenian parliament and Council voted for incorporation of Karabakh to Armenia. As a solution, the Soviet leadership established "a special government administration in Karabakh," subjecting the region to direct control from Moscow. In 1991, the region declared its independence in a popular referendum and a fight broke out among Armenian, Azeri and Soviet troops due to Armenian territorial claims. Since 1992, Armenian Armed Forces have

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<sup>58</sup> Johanna Popjanevski, "Georgia Speeds up Efforts toward Conflict Resolution in South Ossetia," CACI (Central Asia – Caucasus Institute) Analyst, 07/25/2007 issue, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4666>.

<sup>59</sup> Temur Iakobashvili, "Can Georgia Join NATO Without Solving the Conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia?" The German Marshall Fund of the United States, The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, *Black Sea Paper Series*, no 3, p.2, <http://www.gmfus.org/doc/Black>.

<sup>60</sup> Charles King, "The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States", *World Politics*, 53. 2001, 546.

<sup>61</sup> Temur Iakobashvili, "Can Georgia Join NATO Without Solving the Conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia?" The German Marshall Fund of the United States, The Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, *Black Sea Paper Series*, no 3, p. 2, <http://www.gmfus.org/doc/Black>.

<sup>62</sup> Johnson's Russia List, JRL "Russia: Putin Calls For 'Universal Principles' To Settle Frozen Conflicts", Prague, February 1, 2006, (RFE/RL), <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/2006-32-31.cfm>.

occupied 20% of Azerbaijan's territory including the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven surrounding districts. The full scale ethnic war ended with a ceasefire in 1994 where more than 35,000 people were killed, nearly one million ethnic Azerbaijanis were displaced from the Nagorno-Karabakh proper,<sup>63</sup> 600,000 ethnic Azerbaijanis and 300,000 ethnic Armenians moved from other parts of the countries.<sup>64</sup> Despite the cease fire, the Armenians refused to retreat from the occupied territories until the independence of the territory was recognized.

The overview of all the three conflicts demonstrates that the causes of the disputes were ethno-political and the course of the resolution process would be greatly determined with the constructive involvement of the regional power Russia.

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<sup>63</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, Military, Nagorno-Karabakh, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nagorno-karabakh.htm>.

<sup>64</sup> Reuters Foundation, "Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict - Secessionist Region Faces Uncertain Future", March 5, 2007, [http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/NK\\_CON.htm?v=at\\_a\\_glance](http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/NK_CON.htm?v=at_a_glance).

### Chapter 3: Third Party Intervener – Russia

The mediators often intervene to promote their own interests in violation of the principle of mediator neutrality. During the war in Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia, the peace mediation was conducted from the side of Russia, the UN and the OSCE. Georgia welcomed different foreign mediation incentives in order to balance Russia's dominating role and increase the chances of managing the conflicts in the long run.” After peace negotiations by the UN and OSCE, the conflicts in the republics of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh reached relative stability and did not return to their previous levels of violence, however political solution to the conflicts have not been found turning the region into an area of frozen conflicts. This chapter examines the interests of Russia in the South Caucasus region and argues that regional security and the absence of meddling third power is a key precondition for international mediation success.

Located in a geographic buffer zone between several regional powers – Russia, Turkey, and Iran – Georgia has historically had to balance its external relations. Nowadays, control over Georgia is considered by some regional powers as a prerequisite to domination in the South Caucasus and more broadly in Central Asia. Therefore, Georgia attracted the interest of the Western oil companies who formulated in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project; in response, and to counterbalance Russia, Georgia aligned itself with Western capitals. Georgia adopted pro-Western orientated foreign policy which involves seeking Western mediation in the country's ethno-political crises. The geopolitical games of the great powers are viewed by Georgian elite as a window of opportunity for implementing their strategic interests.

After final recognition of Georgia's independence in 1992, “Russia's official position was that a stable, independent Georgia was necessary for security along Russia's southern border.”<sup>65</sup> Georgia had strategic importance for Russia: access the Black Sea through Georgia, which was questionable due to unstable relations with Ukraine; creation of a buffer between Russia and Islamic radical movements from Turkey and Iran; protection of the 370,000 ethnic Russians living in Georgia; and prevention of the refugee influx in the Russia

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<sup>65</sup> U.S. Online Library of Congress, *Georgia: A Country Study*, ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/georgia/20.htm>.



– North Caucasus.<sup>66</sup> The national security importance of Georgia was also openly declared by the Russian military policy makers.<sup>67</sup> In pursuing these interests Russia offered mediation in Georgia's ethnic crises in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and at the same time was encouraging Georgia to broaden the autonomy to those groups for the country's national stability. However, throughout the Abkhazian conflict, "Russia overtly provided the separatists with arms, ammunition, and intelligence, and Russian soldiers participated directly in the hostilities on the Abkhaz side."<sup>68</sup> Even now, Moscow's interests can be characterized as "foreign-policy inertia and the grasping of a superpower in rapid decline."<sup>69</sup>

In 1995 Georgian and Russia signed an agreement on the Russian military equipment and military bases withdrawal which remained in the country after the disintegration of the USSR. The majority of the facilities were closed during 1997 – 1999 and by 1999 the Russian Navy as well as border guards completed the withdrawal, which was fervently criticized by nationalist and communist leaders.<sup>70</sup> At the OSCE Istanbul Summit on November 17, 1999, Yeltsin and Shevardnadze signed a joint statement according to which Russia committed itself to withdraw the Vaziani and Gudauta military bases out of the four remaining ones before July 1, 2001 while the timeframe for the Akhalkalaki and Batumi bases was to be negotiated separately. Russia also agreed to decrease the equipment limited by the Conventional Arms Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) on the territory of Georgia by the end of 2000. The CFE implementation proceeded smoothly, whereas the bases withdrawal became a contested issue because Russia was prolonging the procedure. At the same time it seemed that Georgia's termination of the CIS Collective Security Treaty in 1999 and NATO integration policy would deteriorate withdrawal cooperation, however the consistent stand of the Georgian authorities awoke respect from Russian side that lead to the continuation of the withdrawal process and examining its relations with the southern neighbour more seriously.<sup>71</sup> After Shevardnadze's visit to Moscow in 2000 Russia agreed to close the bases in a year

<sup>66</sup> U.S. Online Library of Congress, *Georgia: A Country Study*, ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/georgia/20.htm>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Archil Gegeshidze, „Georgia: In Quest of a Niche Strategy”, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and Security Studies, <http://www.gfsis.org/pub/eng/security.php>.

<sup>69</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 124.

<sup>70</sup> Nikolai Sokov, "The Withdrawal of Russian Military Bases from Georgia: Not Solving Anything", PONARS Policy Memo 363, Monterey Institute of International Studies, June 2005, [http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/pm\\_0363.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/pm_0363.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> Mihai Gribincea, *The Russian Policy on Military Bases: Georgia and Moldova*, (Cogito Publishing House, 2001), 259.

under the provision of usage the Vaziani military airport and the promise that NATO military bases will not appear in the country.

Seeking to avoid Russia's monopoly over the conflict management process, Georgia tried to increase the role of the West, resulting in the formation of the group "Friends of UN Secretary General on Abkhazia."<sup>72</sup> Having comprehensive interests, Russia has actively manipulated Georgia's domestic vulnerabilities in order to retain its sphere of influence in the region. Presence in Georgia provides leverage for Russia to check possibility of prospective NATO expansion into the Caspian Basin. Also, Russia's control over Georgia would easily impede the progress of the East – West energy corridor and hamper Western FDI and corporate interests into the Caspian Basin. In addition, Russia considers Georgia as a safety valve for penetration of Turkey's political influence into the North Caucasus and further to the East into Central Asia.<sup>73</sup>

In late 1999, as the Chechen conflict led to the spill-over of the refugees and fighters in the Pankisi Gorge, the Russian air force bombed the northern part of Georgian territory. When the US deployed special forces to train the Georgian military in 2002 in its fight against terrorism, Russia accepted this, although "the [majority of] Russians still view the South Caucasus from a zero-sum game perspective and wish to minimize the spread of US influence".<sup>74</sup> Because Russia finds a profitable economic niche in the South Caucasus, its strategic security in the region should be secured by collaborating with Georgia on an equal footing, not by confrontation.<sup>75</sup>

Recently in March 2008, the Russian lawmakers adopted a statement "Russian policy towards Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transdnestria" stating that "If Georgia conducts military operation in Abkhazia or South Ossetia or in case it joins the NATO, Russia will apply any necessary measure to protect its citizens and will discuss the possibility of beginning speedy

<sup>72</sup> Archil Gegeshidze, „Georgia: In Quest of a Niche Strategy”, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and Security Studies, <http://www.gfsis.org/pub/eng/security.php>.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Svante E. Cornell, “Military and Economic Security Perspectives”, *NBR Analysis*, NBR The National Bureau of Asian Research, vol. 14, no. 3 (2003), p.12. <http://www.nbr.org/publications/analysis/pdf/vol14no3.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> Revaz Gachechiladze, “Geographical Background to a Settlement of the Conflict in Abkhazia”, *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Special Issue (1998), [http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/crs/crs\\_1998sp/crs98sp\\_gar01.html](http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/crs/crs_1998sp/crs98sp_gar01.html).

discussion of recognition of the conflict regions.”<sup>76</sup> This statement clearly highlights the policy of Russia that it wants to expand its interest in the South Caucasus region. Russia’s recent actions in May – sending units of the Railway Forces to Abkhazia – were condemned by the Foreign Ministry of Georgia as “another step of aggression against Georgia’s territorial integrity.”<sup>77</sup>

Russian-Georgian relations thought 2008 could be characterized with tension and periodic escalations. Russian had increased the CIS peacekeeping force to 2,542 troops in Abkhazia, which under the ceasefire terms of 1994 cannot exceed 3,000<sup>78</sup> and established 15 supplementary check-points along the boundary-line in April 2008. Relations between the two countries also degenerated after the Abkhaz fighter jets L-39 downed a Georgian unmanned aircraft that had entered Abkhaz-controlled territory on 20 April 2008 which led Tbilisi to try to internationalize the peacekeeping forces in order to avoid further atrocities. The incident was classified by the UNOMIG as the violation of ceasefire of 1994: “[From] a strict peacekeeping perspective, therefore, the Mission considers that enforcement action by third-parties – in this case the Russian Federation - in the zone of conflict is fundamentally inconsistent with the Moscow Agreement and, aside from possible considerations under international law, undercuts the ceasefire and separation of forces regime.”<sup>79</sup>

In May, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili was to meet Russia’s new president, Dmitry Medvedev, over the latest Georgian peace proposal that reexamined the current peacekeeping format in Abkhazia “replacing Russian peacekeepers with an EU-trained local police force”.<sup>80</sup> In addition, tensions between Georgian and Russia increased after Russia had increased the peacekeeping force to 2,542 troops in Abkhazia, which under the ceasefire

<sup>76</sup> Rustavi 2 Broadcasting Company, “Russian Lawmakers Approve Statement on Conflict Regions,” March 20, 2008, [http://www.rustavi2.com/news/news\\_text.php?pg=&cur\\_d=&month=4&year=08&wth=&ct=0&id\\_news=25346](http://www.rustavi2.com/news/news_text.php?pg=&cur_d=&month=4&year=08&wth=&ct=0&id_news=25346)

<sup>77</sup> Rustavi 2 Broadcasting Company, “Tbilisi Accuses Russian of Military Annexation,” May 31, 2008, [http://www.rustavi2.com/news/news\\_text.php?id\\_news=26507&pg=1&im=main&ct=0&wth=](http://www.rustavi2.com/news/news_text.php?id_news=26507&pg=1&im=main&ct=0&wth=)

<sup>78</sup> Nina Akhmeteli, “Georgia: US and EU Support for Tbilisi Grows Amid Escalating Tension with Russia”, *EURASIANET.org*, May 9, 2008, Eurasia Insight section, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav050908.shtml>.

<sup>79</sup> UNOMIG, Report of UNOMIG on the Incident of 20 April Involving the Downing of a Georgian Unmanned Aerial Vehicle over the Zone of Conflict, May 26, 2008, <http://www.unomig.org/>.

<sup>80</sup> RadioFreeEurope RadioLiberty, “Georgia: Security Council Head Says Russia Can Play ‘Dignified Role’ in Abkhaz Solution,” May 31, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2008/05/29ead414-ad45-468c-a7b8-3d9c84e9419e.html>.

terms of 1994 can not exceed 3,000.<sup>81</sup> The US and the EU intervened with diplomatic negotiations efforts, sending a group of the Foreign Ministers and issuing a declaration reiterating “its firm commitment to the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders as most recently reaffirmed in the UNSC resolution 1808 of 15 April 2008,”<sup>82</sup> thus supporting international efforts for a peaceful settlement of both conflicts.

As this chapter showed, the Russian involvement in the South Caucasus conflicts was determined by its geopolitical interests. As Robert Kagan noted, Russia strives to reestablish its spheres of interests in the Caucasus, it would manipulate with its mediation incentives to the best of its interests.<sup>83</sup> This policy is clarified by Davit Last. According to his explanation, third parties engage in peacekeeping to pursue their interests, with little interest in conflicting parties concerned. “In this perspective, it is a dog-eat-dog, Hobbesian world ideal for Henry Kissinger”.<sup>84</sup> Mediation within a realist framework of international politics shows that because states are rational actors promoting their influence and pursuing their self-interest, mediation becomes a “foreign policy instrument” which the states employ to advance their goals.<sup>85</sup> International disputes in the last decade show heterogeneity of mediator involvement and mediation success. An empirical examination of internal conflicts and mediation efforts from 1945 to 1990 by Bercovitch and Houston reveals that the successful outcome of external mediation is influenced by a number of contextual factors as well as the characteristics of the parties such as political internal composition, clearly defined ethnic identities, and power. In addition, although international mediation might be a reactive process of conflict management<sup>86</sup> “because solutions to ethnic wars do not depend on their causes”<sup>87</sup>, stopping

<sup>81</sup> Nina Akhmeteli, “Georgia: US and EU Support for Tbilisi Grows Amid Escalating Tension with Russia”, *EURASIANET.org*, May 9, 2008, Eurasia Insight section, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav050908.shtml>.

<sup>82</sup> CFSP Statements, “Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on the Escalation of Tension between Georgia and Russia”, May 2, 2008.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Kagan, “Trans-Atlantic Relations: The Return of History” (public lecture at Distinguished Speakers Series, CEU, Budapest, November 19, 2007).

<sup>84</sup> David Last, “From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 5.1 (2003), p. 2, [www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5\\_1last.htm](http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5_1last.htm).

<sup>85</sup> Saadia Touval, “The Superpowers as Mediators,” in *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple approaches to Conflict Management*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin, (London: Macmillan, 1992), 232 – 272.

<sup>86</sup> Jacob Bercovitch and Allison Houston, “The Study of International Mediation: Theoretical Issues and Empirical Evidence,” in *Resolving the International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 13.

ethnic fighting through international engagement would last as long as the intermediaries remain. In case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, because the one of the critical reasons of the conflicts was rebellious ethnic minorities enjoying support from Russia, if support persists, searching for peace solution would be a vain quest.

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<sup>87</sup> Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown et. al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 445.

## Chapter 4: The UN and OSCE Engagement in Georgia

Mediation that is initiated upon request has a more non-binding character<sup>88</sup> and can be seen as part of a broader peacemaking effort to persuade parties to cease hostilities and negotiate a peaceful settlement of the dispute. Mediation is also used in preventive diplomacy, but more often it is utilized to stop on-going conflicts and to find solutions that can preserve the peace. International organizations and intergovernmental organizations have become increasingly active in facilitating conflict settlement between states, and in dealing with conflicts within states. They enhance the possibility of cooperation and peaceful management of the conflicts. However, their increased intervention does not mean increased success in mediating conflicts.<sup>89</sup> In this chapter I will argue that mediation may fail when international mediators are trying not to antagonize an interested third party. First, I will review the UN mediation methods and characteristics and afterwards I will examine the UN engagement in Abkhazia and the OSCE in South Ossetia.

### 4.1. The UN Mediation

International organizations from which the UN is the most outstanding in international conflict management have played a significant role in third-party mediation of conflict. This Chapter discusses the engagement of the UN and the OSCE in Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts and examines the outcome of the efforts.

The United Nations, along with its predecessor the League of Nations, were created to systematize third party mediation in international conflicts. It was through the UN that “the notions of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding became entrenched and differentiated”, after issuing the Agenda for Peace in 1992, the supplement in 1995, and the Brahimi Report in 1999.<sup>90</sup> Third generation missions were characterized as guiding peace

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<sup>88</sup> Jacob Bercovitch and Allison Houston, “The Study of International Mediation: Theoretical Issues and Empirical Evidence,” in *Resolving the International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 12.

<sup>89</sup> Eric Brahm, “Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)”, *Beyond Intractability*, March 2005, [http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/role\\_igo/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/role_igo/).

<sup>90</sup> David Last, “From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 5.1 (2003), p. 1, [www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5\\_1last.htm](http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5_1last.htm).

settlements among opposing parties in the civil and ethnic conflict who have “willingly entered into negotiation.”<sup>91</sup> Charter VI of the Charter of the United Nations empowers the UN with mechanisms for facilitating conflict resolution. It states: “the parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement.”<sup>92</sup> With the aim of security, the following Chapter grants the basis for the use of coercion “with respect to threats to the peace”. Chapter VIII of the UN Charter encourages activism on the side of regional organizations “to the maintenance of peace”. For this reason, the UN welcomed the engagement of Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the mediation process in the conflicts in Georgia and Azerbaijan. The main asset for institutional mediation of the UN is its impartiality, which gives it more legitimacy than state-based mediation.<sup>93</sup> However, given that the UN is actively engaged in conflict mediation, the relative failure of such involvement suggests that there might be structural problems with UN mediation, which might be internal to the institution itself. “Central to the UN contradiction is the contrast between the UN's support for national sovereignty and self-determination, and its involvement in the internal conflicts of other nations.”<sup>94</sup> Among the drawbacks of the institutional mediation of the UN are inadequate resources attributed to research of specific cases, the organization's size, insufficient military capability, and financial capabilities that hamper the conflict management process; these drawbacks appeared not to be the major culprits of the UN impotence in managing the South Caucasus conflicts. The most crucial factor hampering the effectiveness of UN mediation was where regional powers themselves impeded the progress of conflict mediation. The UN can be immobilized by disagreements among Security Council members while trying to reach consensus on whether and how to intervene in a conflict.<sup>95</sup> Second, because of the certain mandate, the UN has no power to back up its settlements. In addition, if conflict resolution of the UN is considered through managing the modern ethnic conflicts, then the UN was not

<sup>91</sup> Eric Brahm, “Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)”, *Beyond Intractability*, March 2005, [http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/role\\_igo/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/role_igo/).

<sup>92</sup> Charter of the United Nations, United Nations Hague, International Court of Justice (New York: Department of Public Information, United Nations, 1973), Art. 33.

<sup>93</sup> Anthony Baird, “An Atmosphere of Reconciliation: A Theory of Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Based on the Transcaucasian Conflicts,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 2.4 (1999), [http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2\\_4baird.htm](http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2_4baird.htm).

<sup>94</sup> Eric Brahm, “Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs)”, *Beyond Intractability*, March 2005, [http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/role\\_igo/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/role_igo/).

<sup>95</sup> Anthony Baird, “An Atmosphere of Reconciliation: A Theory of Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Based on the Transcaucasian Conflicts,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 2.4 (1999), [http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2\\_4baird.htm](http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2_4baird.htm).

created to manage internal conflicts. “It was established as an organization of states, not ethnic groups and, thus, has difficulty relating to sub-state actors.”<sup>96</sup> The UN is undergoing significant changes through establishing a High Commissioner on National Minorities and developing preventive diplomacy tools. However, because of the slow institutional development and rising number of ethnic conflicts, the UN still acts through traditional third-party mediation methods.<sup>97</sup>

## **4.2. United Nations in Abkhazia**

Negotiations over the peaceful settlement of the South Caucasus conflicts have been carried out through international organizations – the UN in Abkhazia, and the OSCE in South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as with the third mediating party – the northern neighbour Russia.

After Georgia became the 179<sup>th</sup> member of the UN in July 1992, the negotiating process for a peaceful resolution started in November 1993 in Geneva under the aegis of the UN, with Russia as an intermediary and with the participation of OSCE.<sup>98</sup> As a result, an official ceasefire was signed in December 1993. Following the “Declaration on Measures for a Political Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict” signed on April 4, in 1994 in Moscow, a CIS (predominantly Russian) peacekeeping force was sent rather than a traditional UN peacekeeping force. Even though generally the UN does not accept that the states which have a special interest in a conflict zone would take part in peacekeeping operations, Russia was involved in peacekeeping within its “near abroad”.<sup>99</sup>

On August 24, 1993, the UN sent a United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG) with the authorized strength of 88 military observers under Security Council resolution 858

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in Anthony Baird, “An Atmosphere of Reconciliation: A Theory of Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Based on the Transcaucasian Conflicts,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 2.4 (1999), [http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2\\_4baird.htm](http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2_4baird.htm).

<sup>97</sup> Anthony Baird, “An Atmosphere of Reconciliation: A Theory of Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Based on the Transcaucasian Conflicts,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 2.4 (1999), [http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2\\_4baird.htm](http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2_4baird.htm).

<sup>98</sup> The Republic of Abkhazia, “On the Course of Settling the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict”, information-sheet of the Abkhazian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.abkhazia.org/infosheet19981010.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Josiane Tercinet, “Europe and United Nations Peacemaking” in *Peacekeeping and Peacemaking: Towards Effective Intervention in Post-Cold War Conflicts*, ed. Tom Woodhouse and Robert Bruce, (London: Malcolm Dando, 1998), 179 – 198.



(1993) in compliance with the July 27, 1993 ceasefire agreement between the Republic of Georgia and the Abkhaz authorities. The six-month mandate of the mission entailed ceasefire verification, cease-fire investigation, report on the situation and readiness referring the deployment of mixed interim monitoring groups with Georgian, Abkhaz and Russian units.<sup>100</sup> Interestingly, with this mandate the UN refrained from direct participation in the mixed monitoring groups and maintained the status of an observer mission. The UNOMIG failed to prevent conflict escalation since fighting in Abkhazia resumed in September 1993. Consequently, by Security Council resolution 881 (1993), on 4 November 1993 the mission was suspended according to an interim mandate that included maintenance of contacts between both parties and the Russian military contingent, monitoring and reporting on the developments of situation relevant to the UN efforts to encourage a comprehensive political settlement.<sup>101</sup> In the same mandate, the UN also welcomed the assistance of the Russia as facilitator “to carry forward the peace process with the aim of achieving an overall political settlement.”<sup>102</sup> After signing “the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces” by the conflicting sides in May 1994 in Moscow, Security Council, by its resolution 937 (1994) of 27 July 1994, extended the UNOMIG's military observers strength to 136 and extended the mandate. The document reaffirmed its “commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity” of Georgia and stipulated monitoring demilitarization, patrol operations, cooperation with the CIS peacekeeping force.<sup>103</sup>

With the deadlock in the peace process, the general situation on the ground also remained unsettled. The insufficiency of Abkhazi law enforcement was particularly obvious in the lower Gali zone, while the central authorities failed to fully control the Kodori Valley upper part. Destabilizing factors include criminality and uncontrolled armed forces. Constant violations of the “Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces” and restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNOMIG persisted that also comprised numerous incidents of attacks on the UNOMIG office and abduction of the personnel over 1999 – 2000 that in turn hampered the Mission's capacity to fulfill its mandate.<sup>104</sup> In the Report to the Security Council on 18 January 2001, the Secretary-General declared that the continued lack of

<sup>100</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution, S/RES/858 (1993), August 24, 1993.

<sup>101</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution, S/RES/881 (1993), November 4, 1993.

<sup>102</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution, S/RES/881 (1993), November 4, 1993.

<sup>103</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution, S/RES/937 (1994), July 21, 1994.

<sup>104</sup> UNOMIG, Georgia – UNOMIG – Background,  
<http://www.un.org/depts/dpko/missions/unomig/background.html>.

progress on the crucial issue of the political status of Abkhazia within Georgia was regrettable and could endanger the entire peace process in the future.<sup>105</sup> The Secretary-General expressed the hope that the third Meeting on Confidence-building Measures, in March 2001 in Yalta, would boost reconciliation; however, despite urging both sides towards mutual understanding, the “most significant outcome was “the renewal of the commitment of the parties to the non-use of force.”<sup>106</sup> Subsequent reports also noted that the negotiations over the future political status of Abkhazia within Georgia had not started yet.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, the Security Council extended the UNOMIG’s mandate for six months on July 31, 2002 and later until 31 January 2003. Over the period of 2003 till 2007 there was a “new momentum in peace efforts” against the background of the continued lack of progress that the first time in nearly four years, the Abkhaz authorities had received the Group of Friends consisting of France, Germany, Russian, the US and the UK.<sup>108</sup> However, still little progress has been made at the practical level of political settlement. After a series of extension of the UNOMIG mandates, the police component of 20 officers was added to the Mission assisting to the overall security situation in the conflict zone. The Security Council extended the mandate of UNOMIG until April 15, 2008, and on April 4, 2008 UN Report Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that unlike the tensed relation that characteristic to 2006 and 2007, it is a relatively stable security situation at the border line and in the Kodori Valley between the two sides the previous few months, which is likely to contribute to the improvement in relations.<sup>109</sup> The report says that “UNOMIG continued its efforts to help prevent the escalation of tensions in the zone of conflict and facilitate resumption of dialogue between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides.”<sup>110</sup> The Secretary-General recommended the extension of the mandate until October 15; nevertheless, despite the fact that the UNOMIG has played an important role in promoting stability and practical cooperation between the parties, the UN peacekeeping process could be assessed not very highly because it failed to bring about the

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<sup>105</sup> United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, S/2001/59, January 18, 2001.

<sup>106</sup> United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General Concerning the Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, S/2001/401, April 24, 2001.

<sup>107</sup> United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General Concerning the Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, S/2001/713, July 19, 2001.

<sup>108</sup> United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, S/2003/412, April 9, 2003.

<sup>109</sup> UN News Centre, “Further Stability Can Boost Prospects for Georgian-Abkhaz Peace”, UN report, April 4, 2008, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26211&Cr=georgia&Cr1=>.

<sup>110</sup> United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, S/2008/219, April 2, 2008.

long-lasting settlement. As David Last states, “using peacekeeping”<sup>111</sup> to impose a solution not acceptable to the parties results in escalation, enforcement, and war, or in perpetual imperial policing in a stagnant conflict with periodic eruptions.<sup>112</sup>

The UNOMIG had the kind of characteristics necessary to control outbursts of violence best described by David Last. First, it enjoyed diplomatic status, allowing it the free movement and considerable powers of enquiry. Second, it was deployed in multinational teams that provided transparency and provided the circumstance that its information was built to an international consensus on action. Most importantly, although the UNOMIG had explicitly an observer mission, nevertheless it had a dual mandate to monitor and assist. Monitoring entailed reporting up to enable top-down diplomatic intervention or influence on the parties; and assistance meant intercession directly with the parties to help find immediate solutions.<sup>113</sup>

The UN promoted extensive social and humanitarian assistance in the conflict zones of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. With the establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) it deals with over one million refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as a result of the protracted conflicts in the South Caucasus with an annual budget of US\$ 9.4 million.<sup>114</sup> In Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts, the UNHCR is part of two parallel peace processes with its supportive role in conflict settlement efforts and a political dialogue. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) is operating in Georgia with two sub-offices in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali dealing with the humanitarian needs and facilitating the development programming. The absence of a political solution to the conflict complicates its work.<sup>115</sup> The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) operates in the crisis prevention and recovery fields in both conflicts in Georgia. In the South Ossetian conflict zone, the UNDP finalized more than 20 projects by July 2007 and engaged in the European Commission-funded programme for improving

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<sup>111</sup> Last refers to peacekeeping as to “third party intervention to control and prevent violence”.

<sup>112</sup> David Last, “From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 5.1 (2003), p. 1, [www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5\\_1last.htm](http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5_1last.htm).

<sup>113</sup> David Last, “From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 5.1 (2003), p. 2, [www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5\\_1last.htm](http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5_1last.htm).

<sup>114</sup> UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, *High Commissioner to Visit to Southern Caucasus*, UNHCR Briefing Notes, 15 August 2006, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/44e1a6027.html>.

<sup>115</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “OCHA IN 2002”, Georgia, (United Nations: New York and Geneva, 2002): 99.

household supplies and infrastructure.<sup>116</sup> Working since 1993, the UNICEF in Georgia has been cooperating with the other UN Agencies in the conflict zones. Despite limited financial resources and international staff, the UNICEF has been dealing with key interventions, providing supply and technical assistance in the areas of child protection and social development in the conflict zones.<sup>117</sup> The Human Rights Office (HRO) forms part of UNOMIG and is jointly operated by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the OSCE.<sup>118</sup> By resolution 1494 (2003) of 30 July 2003, the Council authorized the Secretary-General recommendations that in order to strengthen the capacity to carry out its mandate, and create a safe condition for the IDPs return, the UN police component be added to UNOMIG.<sup>119</sup> In this direction also operates a low-key capacity and confidence-building role through the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV). These assistant programmes show that the engagement of international organizations in the Georgian conflicts entailed more humanitarian assistance rather than effective efforts towards actual political conflict resolution which highlights the cautious approach avoiding the direct engagement. Despite the UN-led “Geneva process” starting from 1997 that focused on the three priority areas: security and political issues; the return of refugees and IDPs; and economic cooperation, led to little substantial results on the key issues of the negotiations, thus, the “Georgian-Abkhaz peace process has remained stalled”.<sup>120</sup>

The EU has not been a direct third party in the conflict resolution mechanisms, and its contribution to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia dispute settlements is so far limited to economic rehabilitation and confidence building measures. During 1992 – 2006, the EU provided 505 million euros for supporting various above mentioned incentives in both conflict zones.<sup>121</sup> Despite the intensified diplomatic activity through the EU Special Representative for Southern Caucasus since 2003, and launching a European Security and

<sup>116</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Crisis Prevention and Recovery, <http://www.undp.org.ge/new/index>.

<sup>117</sup> UNICEF Humanitarian Action, “Georgian Conflict Zones: Abkhazia and South Ossetia,” donor update, September 15, 2005, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Georgia\\_DU\\_15Sep2005.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Georgia_DU_15Sep2005.pdf).

<sup>118</sup> UNOMIG, Georgia UNOMIG Mandate, April 11, 2008, <http://www.un.org/depts/dpko/missions/unomig/mandate.html>.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Korneli Kakachia, “The Role of International Organisations and Regional Actors in Abkhazia, Georgia,” 4<sup>th</sup> ECPR General Conference, Pisa Italy, September 6 – 8, 2007, [http://www.mic.org.mk/Balkan\\_Caucasus\\_publication.pdf](http://www.mic.org.mk/Balkan_Caucasus_publication.pdf).

<sup>121</sup> European Commission External Relations, Summary on EU-Georgia Relations, [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/georgia/eu\\_georgia\\_summary/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/georgia/eu_georgia_summary/index_en.htm).

Defence Policy (ESDP) mission, the EU has refrained from direct engagement in the conflict resolution process.

The UN played a mediator role, sent observer mission to track the Russian peacekeepers' actions, served as a forum of discussion and a transparent information provider. "But the UN's mediation of the conflict has had little effect, as does its current "observing," other than giving legitimacy to Russia's actions as the third-party mediator."<sup>122</sup> Little progress was made during 2001 to achieve a political settlement in Georgia's conflict. UN-sponsored talks between the opposing sides were cancelled on three occasions because of increased tensions. In October 2001, hostilities resumed in the Kodori Valley and the UNOMIG helicopter was shot down.<sup>123</sup> On May 10, 2008 the US envoy held talks with Abkhaz authorities trying to stimulate negotiations between Tbilisi and the Russian-backed province. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza urged both sides to start negotiations to avoid a resumed armed conflict.<sup>124</sup>

### **4.3. OSCE and South Ossetia**

Created in 1972 under the UN Charter Chapter VIII, the primary role of the OSCE was the "maintenance of international peace and security". Managing ethnic conflict, specifically "conflict prevention and confidence in the field of the human dimension of the CSCE" was first institutionalized at the 1990 Copenhagen Meeting within the OSCE.<sup>125</sup>

Another ethno-political conflict where international mediation was actively conducted was the South Ossetian conflict. The Georgian and South Ossetian sides initiated Russian and OSCE-mediated negotiations on October 30, 1995. As a result, the use of force was

<sup>122</sup> Anthony Baird, "An Atmosphere of Reconciliation: A Theory of Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Based on the Transcaucasian Conflicts," *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 2.4 (1999), [http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2\\_4baird.htm](http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2_4baird.htm).

<sup>123</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "OCHA IN 2002", Georgia, (United Nations: New York and Geneva, 2002): 99.

<sup>124</sup> International Herald Tribune, associated Press, "Senior U.S. Official Travels to Georgia's Rebel Province to Quell Spiraling Tensions, May 10, 2008, <http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2008/05/10/news/Georgia-US-Abkhazia.php>.

<sup>125</sup> Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, Art 43, [http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/1990/06/13992\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/1990/06/13992_en.pdf).

renounced in “Memorandum on Measures for Providing Security and Joint Confidence” signed in May 1996, and a small number of refugees was repatriated to their homes in the zone of conflict. After the cease-fire agreement and the implementation of the peacekeeping procedures, there were still a few isolated incidents of violence. The OSCE considered the cease-fire a success inasmuch as it separated the belligerent parties. The rising tensions in this frozen conflict resulted in the reemergence of armed conflict in August 2004. The OSCE used its the most frequently used strategic tool, peacekeeping missions, deploying them in the conflict zone. The Joint Peacekeeping Force, representing the Georgian, Russian and OSCE sides, assumed responsibility for keeping the two sides apart. At that time, the Georgian government tried to involve the international community in the search for a conflict settlement, however Russia hindered Georgian efforts to organize an international conference on the issue within the OSCE. It has also hindered a considerable expansion of OSCE monitoring incentives in the region.<sup>126</sup> Incorporation of the human dimension in the security activities was reflected in the new mandates of the OSCE “long duration mission” in Georgia.<sup>127</sup>

The impact of the youth on mediation of conflict might be one of the conditions that favor the success of mediators. Thus, mediators can assist resolve conflicts by helping youth on the ground to mobilize around reconciliation movements. To this respect it is interesting to observe the activity of the NATO Public Diplomacy Division as in August, 2006 it organized the NATO Summer School “Euro Atlantic Integration – Guarantee for Peace and Stability” for the youth from South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia.<sup>128</sup> Such movements assist the dialogue process between the youth and turn out to be benevolent for the mediation process. In contrast with the South Ossetia case, there are embedded obstacles in finding common points of contact between the Georgian and Abkhaz nations because civil war and lack of frequent contact severely damaged inter-ethnic relations.

<sup>126</sup> Jaba Devdariani, “Expectations Low for Georgia – South Ossetia Talks”, EURASIANET.org, April 11, 2004, Eurasia Insight section, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110404.shtml>.

<sup>127</sup> Arie Bloed, “The Human Dimension of the OSCE: Past, Present and Prospects”, *OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Bulletin*, vol., no. 3, (Fall 1995, Warsaw): 16.

<sup>128</sup> Georgia for NATO, “NATO Summer School for Georgian and South Ossetian Students and Young Journalists,” August, 28 – 30, Georgia, <http://www.georgiafor nato.ge/A/NATO%20Summer%20School.htm>.

Nevertheless despite all the incentives, international mediation for reaching the political solution has not been successful in the South Caucasus conflicts due to the fact that powerful player Russia has been interested in continuation of the conflicts. Thus, the mediation efforts undertaken by the UN and OSCE were unlikely to succeed because they did not intervene forcefully, but very cautiously ineffectively.

## Chapter 5. Comparative Case:

### International Involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is one of the most extensive cases of institutional mediation. In order to better show that the involvement of the third party regional power impedes the international mediation process I will discuss the comparative case of international involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It discusses the engagement of the OSCE in this conflict arguing that not only its first precedence of engagement, weak mandate, lacking practical guidelines for peace-keeping and insufficient military personnel accounted for the OSCE failure, but also most importantly the intervention of a destabilizing regional power, Russia, impeded political resolution of the conflict.

During the period of transformation of the CSCE into OSCE, discussions over creating case-specific peacekeeping forces ensued, thus with the case of Nagorno-Karabakh ethnic conflict resolution activity was launched.<sup>129</sup> The international community at first considered the conflict an internal one and refrained from involvement; even after the engagement, their efforts were not quite successful because of the dominating role of the country's northern neighbour. International mediation process can be divided into four parts: During 1992 predominance of the CSCE mediation in unilateral mediation attempts and Russian weakness; In the second half of 1992 policy shift of the Russian interests which lead to the decreased influence of the CSCE; From December 1994 till the end of 1996 cooperation and confidence-building between Russia and the CSCE took place which resulted in practical gains; At a Budapest meeting in December 1994, as the CSCE decided to establish a force for the High Karabakh, Russia demanded a resolution of the Security Council for the deployment where she could use her veto within the Force or CIS troops.<sup>130</sup> And the period of January 1997 when together with Russia, the US and France became co-chairs of the Minsk

<sup>129</sup> Anthony Baird, "An Atmosphere of Reconciliation: A Theory of Resolving Ethnic Conflicts Based on the Transcaucasian Conflicts," *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 2.4 (1999), [http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2\\_4baird.htm](http://trininstitute.org/ojpcr/2_4baird.htm).

<sup>130</sup> Josiane Tercinet, "Europe and United Nations Peacemaking" in *Peacekeeping and Peacemaking: Towards Effective Intervention in Post-Cold War Conflicts*, ed. Tom Woodhouse and Robert Bruce, (London: Malcolm Dando, 1998), 179 – 198.



group.<sup>131</sup> The entities with the aim of mediating the conflict was formally named the Minsk Conference where the meeting was envisaged and the negotiating team received the name the “Minsk Group”. In March 1992 the OSCE tried to bring together the opposing parties at an international conference in Minsk. Because Azerbaijan refused to participate until the return of the occupied territories, the CSCE organized preliminary meetings of the negotiating team Minsk Group of eleven countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Russia, Sweden, Turkey and the US to resolve the problem.<sup>132</sup> In a peaceful plan suggested by Mario Raffaelli, the Minsk Group chairman in October 1993, the Nagorno-Karabakh armed forces were to withdraw gradually from the different occupied territories within one month, and Azerbaijan had to lift its blockade in corresponding stages. Azerbaijan refused to fully comply with this condition. At the November 1993 Minsk Group in Vienna, in accordance with the peace plan, the Azerbaijani demands were taken into account<sup>133</sup>

Since 1997, the negotiation talks have been mediated by the US, French and Russian co-chairmen of the Minsk Group. When this group was created, Russia was relatively weak, and so it adopted a low profile in the mediation. In 1993, the CSCE set a deadline for the ceasefire. The issue of the peacekeeping was complicated by the composition of the force due to the fact that Russia insisted on a “Russian-only peacekeeping force” like the one in Abkhazia, but under its mandate the OSCE refused to accept these terms.<sup>134</sup> At the CSCE Budapest Declaration in 1994, military peacekeeping were added to the OSCE conflict settlement instruments that further enhanced the CSCE's role and its capacity in conflict prevention and crisis management, employing, *inter alia*, the CSCE peacekeeping operations and missions;<sup>135</sup> thus, the first OSCE peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh were established. For intensifying cooperative relations with Azerbaijan, the OSCE office was established in Baku in 2000.

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<sup>131</sup> Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: a Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (England: Curzon, 2001), 110.

<sup>132</sup> Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Report on the Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, Doc. 7182, October 7, 1994.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: a Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (England: Curzon, 2001), 112.

<sup>135</sup> CSCE Budapest Declaration, “Towards A Genuine Partnership In A New Era”, DOC.RC/1/95, December 21, 1994.

The UN refrained from direct engagement in the conflict and limited its role by issuing resolutions of the Security Council condemning fighting, affirming territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and resuming negotiations.<sup>136</sup> Its involvement through the UNDP, UNHCR, and UNOCHA entailed more general assistance schemes to Armenia and Azerbaijan. The US with numerous USAID funded programmes was among the main donor organizations, however, its stand towards the disputing parties was quite controversial. The complicating issue was the pressure of the Armenian lobby in the US Congress leading to the Freedom Support Act Section 907<sup>137</sup>, which restricted non-humanitarian US assistance to Azerbaijan and turned Armenia into one of the highest per capita recipients of US aid in the world.<sup>138</sup> On the other hand, the US government and oil company's interest in the Azerbaijani Caspian basin oil resources correlated with US involvement in the conflict settlement process. In addition, after the Florida tripartite meeting in 2002, President Bush reiterated his concerns towards the region.

Thus far, however, a political settlement has not been reached. The OSCE Ministerial Council Statement encouraged negotiations, regretted the occasional clashes along the front lines and called on both parties to abide strictly by the ceasefire.<sup>139</sup> On March 12, Azerbaijani side demanded replacing or terminating the co-chairmanship of the Minsk Group, which the Armenian side interpreted as dissolution of the current format of negotiations.<sup>140</sup> Later, on March 14, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution supporting the Minsk Group reiterating Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Armenian forces from the Armenian occupied territories. Significantly, the mediating Minsk Group parties--the US, Russia and France did not vote, and the 39 countries voting for included Georgia, Ukraine and Turkey.<sup>141</sup> Extensive military clashes took place at the demarcation line in Nagorno-Karabakh in May 5, 2008 fourteen years since the ceasefire. During this clash, there was a death toll of more than ten people from the both sides. The

<sup>136</sup> Security Council Resolution 822 (1993), adopted by the Security Council at its 3205th meeting. April 30, 1993.

<sup>137</sup> Carol Migdalovitz, "Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict", CRS Issue Brief for Congress", The Library of Congress, December 4, 2001.

<sup>138</sup> Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", ECMI Working Paper # 15, February 2002, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), 2002, p. 10.

<sup>139</sup> OSCE, Ministerial Council Statement on Nagorno Karabakh, Brussels, 5 December 2006.

<sup>140</sup> Naira Hayrumyan, "The UN resolution: Will Azerbaijan Break up the OSCE Minsk Group Format?" Armenia.Now.com, 28 March, 2008, <http://www.armenianow.com/?action>.

<sup>141</sup> Zarema Velikhanova and Ara Tadevosian, "Armenia, Azerbaijan Clash over OSCE Mediation", Caucasus Reporting Service, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, [http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=343764&apc\\_state=henpcrs](http://www.iwpr.net/?p=crs&s=f&o=343764&apc_state=henpcrs).

OSCE negotiations turn out to be unsuccessful due to the fact that the Armenian military violated the ceasefire regime in May 2008.<sup>142</sup> In response, the three Minsk Group Co-Chairmen – the Russian Ambassador Yury Merzlyakov, Ambassador Bernard Fassier from France and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza issued a joint statement calling the parties to restore confidence, reaffirming that Nagorno-Karabakh's status is still the subject of negotiations.<sup>143</sup>

During the disintegration of the USSR, Russia was best-equipped to influence the sister-republics through integrating them into the Collective Security Treaty (TCS) in May 1992, which was a military dimension of the CIS.<sup>144</sup> The Treaty had a five-year term and by 1999 it was in disarray along with other cooperative schemes with Russia. Azerbaijan, discontented with the Russian failure to mediate its conflict with Armenia, along with Georgia which was experiencing the ineffective involvement of the northern neighbour in its conflicts, refused to reaffirm the Treaty for the coming five years.<sup>145</sup> On the basis of the TCS, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan founded a defense pact called the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 1999.<sup>146</sup> While Armenia has been arguing referring the contribution of the forces to deter a potential incursion, with its participation it enjoys strategic cooperation with Russia that in turn makes a peaceful outcome between Azerbaijan and Armenia less likely. Despite economic development and political independence from Russia (mostly energy independence), Russia leverage Azerbaijan through the Karabakh conflict. In addition, the recent talks about the priority of self-determination over territorial integrity complicate peaceful resolution of the conflict. Therefore, considering the deadlocked peaceful negotiations, despite the political targets of Azerbaijani government to

<sup>142</sup> Timur Husseinov, "Armenian Military Forces Attacking Positions of the Azerbaijani Army in Four Regions", Day.Az, May 24, 2008, <http://www.day.az/news/politics/119102.html>.

<sup>143</sup> J. Babayeva, "OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Call on Azerbaijan and Armenia to Restore Confidence along the Line of Contact", March 8, 2008, TrendNews, <http://news.trendaz.com/index.shtml?show=news&newsid=1152518&lang=EN>

<sup>144</sup> Alexander Yegorov, "Collective Security System of the CIS States and Measures Providing Peace on the Territory of the Former Soviet Union", NATO Individual Democratic Institutions Research Fellowships (1994-1996) Report, <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/94-96/yegorov/04.htm>.

<sup>145</sup> Adam Weinstein, "Russian Phoenix: The Collective Security Treaty Organization," *Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Winter/Spring 2007, p.171, [http://diplomacy.shu.edu/academics/journal/resources/journal\\_dip\\_pdfs/journal\\_of\\_diplomacy\\_vol8\\_no1/13-Weinstein.pdf](http://diplomacy.shu.edu/academics/journal/resources/journal_dip_pdfs/journal_of_diplomacy_vol8_no1/13-Weinstein.pdf).

<sup>146</sup> Simon Saradzhyan, "Russia's CIS Alliances Lack Real Substance", International Relations and Security Network, ISN Security Watch in Moscow, March 21, 2005, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=11024>.

maintain its territorial integrity by increasing the military budget and solving the conflict by military expansion, the probability of desired political outcome is low due to the fact that on the basis of the CSTO pact agreement, Russian forces are expected to assist Armenia. All these factors suggest that the Karabakh conflict is unlikely to be solved in the near future, and the role of international mediation is not effective due to the direct influence of the “big power” of Russia in the South Caucasus region.

Despite the fact that the initial target of Armenian minority of Azerbaijan was to be connected to Armenia for political and historical reasons, war results showed that the obvious motivation was quite different. Interestingly, the seven regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh – Aghdam, Fizuli, Djabrail, Zangelan, Gubadly, Lachin and Kelbajar – were mainly populated by ethnic Azerbaijanis. The Armenian side reasoned these actions as an attempt of obtaining safety circle around Nagorno-Karabakh in case of a possible future offense. The withdrawal of military forces from those seven regions is currently the subject of international discussion, as a compromise from Armenian side to get the political independence for the region and prospective integration into Armenia. This bargaining condition of the cordon zone demonstrates the complexity of the conflict and decreases the likelihood of a peaceful political settlement. It is worth noting that the Azerbaijani side has proposed a high level autonomy including self-determination and Armenian minority rights along the borders of Azerbaijan as a possible compromise solution for this problem. Even after the political settlement of the conflict, although the peaceful coexistence of the belligerent nations in the region is uncertain, in order to guarantee peaceful coexistence, Azerbaijan suggests deployment of the international peacekeepers on the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

However, separatist actions supported by the “strong power” seem to delay a political solution. By 2008 the peace process seemed to be exhausted without a final political settlement of the conflict due to the fact that one side of the conflicting parties had grown increasingly hostile to the role of the OSCE in the negotiations. Russia was hampering the entire mediation process through unilateral mediation attempts aiming to reestablish its dominance in the region, forcing Azerbaijan of re-entry of the troops and leveraging the conflict via backing Armenia.

Thus, as identified in this chapter, the UN resolutions and recommendations were not quite effective in resolving conflicts and Russia as the permanent members of the Security Council is evidently responsible for the ineffective outcome of the mediation efforts. As King puts it, among the causes of the armed conflicts in the South Caucasus were interethnic disputes and external interests,<sup>147</sup> these structural factors would impede any international efforts in searching for the political solution.

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<sup>147</sup> Charles King, “The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia’s Unrecognized States”, *World Politics*, 53. 2001, 529.

## CONCLUSION

The tensed inter-ethnic relations in the South Caucasus endangers the regional security of Eurasia, therefore researching conflicts that are poorly studied offers an insight to a better understanding of the nature of the conflicts and possibilities for their management. The autonomous areas of South Ossetia and Abkhazia added to the problems of Georgia's post-Soviet governments. By 1993 the separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia threatened to fragment Georgia into several pieces and Russian interference in the conflicts impeded the emergence of a permanent settlement, while complicating Georgia's relations with its northern neighbor. Even though the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the only zone in the South Caucasus where Russia has not been leading the peacekeeping operations, it was providing considerable backing to Armenia. In all the three cases, because international assistance has been conditioned on the status issue and “the sphere of influence” from the regional power, it has turned out to be limited in scope.

Even if international mediators are committed to be impartial, so that their actions do not reflect the interests of the stronger sides, or parties backed by the regional powers, the outcome of their mediation could be hindered by the interests of the stronger parties. Although we might expect that meddling state would help the center to solve the secessionist minority problems, the model of South Caucasus conflicts demonstrates that the presence of interventionist actor is more likely to deteriorate rather than ameliorate ethnic tensions.<sup>148</sup> Unfortunately, third parties are still concentrated on “strategic peacekeeping in their own interests and peacekeeping without conflict resolution is a dead end.”<sup>149</sup> In the Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh cases, international engagement failed to be fully successful because the overall mediation process involved the power-based mediation in the form of the third party Russia involvement that undermined a benevolent political solution.

Because the context in which the South Caucasus conflict occurred affected its process and result, the mediation was also shaped by the context and characteristics of the situation. In the case of the South Caucasus, the specific factors and in particular interests of Russia

<sup>148</sup> Erin K. Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: the Paradox of Minority Empowerment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 40.

<sup>149</sup> David Last, “From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding,” *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, no 5.1 (2003), p. 8, [www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5\\_1last.htm](http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5_1last.htm).

influenced the efforts of the international mediation to manage the conflicts. Because effectiveness is crucial for successful outcome, the mediation efforts should be measured to this respect. Although the international organizations argue that the mediation in Georgian conflicts could be considered successful because it brought freezing the conflict with ceasefire agreements and relative stability, the overall outcome can not be seen as a success. Permanent clashes and armed operations in both conflict regions demonstrate the turbulence in the country that in turn affects the regional stability.

Thus, while mediation might facilitate conflict stabilization, it may fail to resolve the conflicts permanently in the long run. Because mediation is a complex process and its usage depends on context-dependent factors, there does not appear to be a one size-fits-all solution to internal conflict. However, the conclusions from individual cases of Abkhazi and South Ossetia conflicts suggest the overriding importance of regional stability and the absence of an interventionist third party that is backing one of the belligerent sides. Regional security is an initial condition for mediation success. The destructive effects of external patrons who are providing support for rebelling minorities hamper political outcome of the disputes. Thus, while engaging in mediation process, mediators should take a neutral approach in order to find a long-lasting political solution.

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