

# **INTERACTIONS BETWEEN FORMAL AND INFORMAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION EFFORTS IN GEORGIA AND MOLDOVA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present thesis examines the conflict resolution efforts of official and unofficial interveners involved in Georgia and Moldova in order to identify why despite the involvement of official mediators and unofficial facilitators and International NGOs the conflict in Georgia escalated into violence, whereas the frozen conflict in Moldova has been managed rather peacefully.

The thesis critically examines the argument of the conflict resolution proponents that closer cooperation of the official and unofficial actors in the resolution process through the practice of problem solving workshops or dialogue series, aimed at overcoming misperceptions and stereotypes about the other and addressing underlying psychological issues, is necessary for a successful resolution of the conflict.

After analysis of the empirical data presented in the thesis, I argue that the practice of problem-solving workshops or other similar projects cannot in itself create a setting that would help deescalate and resolve the conflict. Other factors stemming from the domestic and international politics played a greater role in the manner the negotiations have been carried out and progressed, and have to be taken into account also by the unofficial facilitators when conducting their work.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960's, with the right to self-determination of the former colonies, the people inhabiting ethnically diverse regions inside the newly independent states started to voice their demand for independence also. Irredentist or secessionist movements around the world mushroomed and the tensions between the center and the breakaway regions escalated into violence. Despite the settlements and cession of direct violent attacks, the conflicts have protracted with no settlement in sight.

Dissatisfaction with the approach to the conflicts of the official diplomats led to creation of initiatives parallel to the official diplomatic negotiations, carried out by private facilitators in the form of informal problem-solving workshops. These practitioners have been arguing for a more long-term approach that would address the underlying needs (Azar and Burton 1986) and perceptions of the parties to the conflict emphasizing that the visible direct violence is only the top of the iceberg. In order to successfully resolve the conflict they propose to look underneath the surface to address the real causes of the violent outbreaks, which are hidden in the cultural and structural violence (Galtung 1995). But as they stress, their efforts should be recognized as complementary to the official negotiations led by diplomats. More recently, there has been growing literature that brings the attention to the importance of coordination of formal and informal conflict resolution efforts (Fisher and Keashly 1991, Lederach 1997, Francis 2002, Miall 2004, Strimling 2006).

Building upon the extensive conflict resolution literature, especially on the pyramid model of actors in conflict by Lederach (1997) and the model of problem-solving workshops (Kelman 2002, Mitchell and Banks 1996), I set out to answer the question why despite

continuous mediation, negotiations and excessive international engagement, the official and unofficial third parties did not succeeded in preventing new escalation of the frozen conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia into violence. To answer this question I conducted a comparative case study, in which I put into contrast the conflict in Georgia with the protracted conflict in Moldova, which has not witnessed another outbreak of violence since the end of war with Transnistria that took place in 1992.

I selected the cases of Georgia and Moldova in particular for my case study because one can identify similar dynamics in both countries. Both countries had seemingly similar starting positions after the breakup of the Soviet Union. In Georgia, its constituent parts - the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia - claimed independence and the tensions escalated into wars in early 1990's, which ended in a quasi victory of the breakaway regions. Abkhazia and South Ossetia functioned as *de facto* states with own political structures, however, did not enjoy *de jure* recognition of international community, which adhered to the principle of territorial integrity of Georgia. Similar dynamics can be observed in Moldova, where Autonomous Oblast of Transnistria, claimed independence in 1990, which led to a short war in 1992. The war resulted in the victory of Transnistria, whose independence was not recognized by the international community either. Official negotiations ensued and have been in progress since the end of the wars in early 1990's.

In both countries the international facilitators stepped in with vigor already 1990's with the vision to address the long-term latent psychological aspects, which if left unexplored, as the theory argues, would perpetuate the conflict and probably lead to another escalation of conflict into violence. To meet this end, they conducted dialogue seminars or problem-solving workshops and different projects engaging a wide array of actors involved in conflict resolution process.

The efforts in the respective countries differed in quality and intensity of cooperation between official and unofficial participants.

My initial hypothesis was that the lack of interaction between the official diplomats and unofficial facilitators in case of Georgia, has led to the escalation of conflict, whereas the problem-solving workshops in Moldova helped create conditions that moved the negotiations forward and helped manage the conflict rather peacefully and constructively.

However, after the analysis of the empirical data presented in the thesis, I came to the conclusion and will argue in my thesis that the practice of problem-solving workshops or other similar projects cannot in itself create a setting that would help deescalate and resolve a conflict. Other factors stemming from the international politics have to be taken into account, also by the unofficial facilitators when conducting their work.

As the case of Georgia shows, the dialogue series did not serve their initial purpose, quite the contrary, they transformed into politicized channels for communication between the two sides. Thus after presenting the data, I will argue that international relations and factors stemming from the international politics, such as strategic importance of a given region have to be addressed when approaching a conflict. In this respect, also the involvement of various International NGOs in the conflict region has to be assessed, since their neutrality or seeming objectiveness can be regarded as endorsement of one party to the conflict over the other.

I base my analysis on the data collected through document and content analysis of primary sources, such as official proposals and documents and secondary sources, such as news and journal articles. To assess the work of Track II, I rely on reports from the workshops, which were produced by the organizations or scholars involved in them, and studies done by scholars who have not taken part in these initiatives. I also conducted interviews with Paata Zakareishvili,

Georgian political scientist and a coordinator of Track II dialogue process, conducted by Berghof Research, Center; Daria Mandziuk, a member of a prominent Moldovan NGO *Contact*, and Ambassador Istvan Gyarmati, who served as Personal Representative of the Chairman in Office of the CSCE to Georgia in 1993-1994 and as the Head of OSCE mission in Moldova in 2004. These interviews should be regarded as a complementary source to the primary and secondary literature and not as a separate research method. For a more thorough research, which was, however, beyond the scope of my thesis, in-depth interviews with government officials, representatives of international mediating teams, local and international NGOs and participants of the workshops and dialogue seminars should be conducted.

I limit my case selection in Georgia to the conflict resolution initiatives carried out solely in Abkhazia. I decided not to include South Ossetia, because there have been only sporadic and short-lived informal initiatives carried out throughout the years. The most notable one was initiated by Harvard's University Conflict Management Group (CMG) in 1995. CMG together with Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) facilitated a number of rather successful low-key seminars that brought together governmental and non-governmental representatives (Matveeva 2002, Fitzgerald 1998).

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one will introduce the debate on constructive resolution of a conflict between three main approaches, started by conflict resolution and conflict transformation practitioners, who challenge the traditional approach of conflict management/settlement. The chapter will pay special focus on official and unofficial actors and methods they employ in approaching a conflict. The second chapter deals with the conflict in Georgia, providing a short historical overview of the conflict dynamics, and focusing on the role of Track I and Track II actors and the proposals they presented to the resolution of the



conflict. The third chapter provides an overview of the conflict in Moldova. The chapter follows a similar pattern, however, special emphasis is put on the problem-solving workshops, which were conducted by Track II actors and which complemented the official negotiations.

## CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

With the decolonization that started in the 1950's and 1960's and which continued with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, around the world ethnic conflicts and disputes mushroomed, most of them stifling the communities without a mutually acceptable resolution or settlement in sight. Even in 1960's, academics or former diplomats like Edward Azar, Herbert Kelman, John McDonald, John Burton, Johan Galtung, Joseph Montville, Harold Saunders, Christopher Mitchell, Ronald Fisher, John Paul Lederach, or Leonard Doob carried out a series of unofficial problem-solving workshops or dialogues that ran parallel to or complemented the activities of official representatives and diplomats who were mediating negotiations with conflicting parties aiming to arrive at a settlement of a given conflict. Since then, there has been a more intense involvement of nongovernmental organizations in conflict resolution and a growing number of unofficial initiatives, undertaken with a firm belief that every conflict can be resolved if people talk and listen to each other.

The growing body of literature on conflict resolution and transformation stirred a debate in conflict theory whether the traditional approach of conflict management, whose aim is to find a settlement to a conflict brokered by official diplomats, is the right and only way how to approach a conflict.

Central to the debate between the three main approaches – conflict management (or settlement), conflict resolution and conflict transformation<sup>1</sup> - is the crucial connection (Ross and

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<sup>1</sup>There is, however, an internal debate on the distinctiveness of conflict transformation and its place as a separate theory from conflict resolution, for the purposes of my thesis, I will not go deeper into this debate and I will treat conflict transformation as a new, emerging theory that helps redefine and move the conflict resolution field further. For more on the debate see, for example, a comprehensive study by Botes (2003).

Rothman 1999, Miall 2004) between the way theorists and practitioners think about the conflict and conceptualize it and the type of third party intervention they advocate. The instrumentalists<sup>2</sup> argue that conflicts are social constructions, which creates a possibility that conflicting groups “will find a way out of the conflict” (Ross and Rothman 1999, p. 4). Conflict, in their view, should not be understood exclusively as a problem of political *status quo* or political order because if the conflicts are managed constructively, they argue that conflicts can be catalysts of change or non-violent struggles for social justice (Reimann 2004). They emphasize that there have been instances when an agreement between “arch enemies” was signed, what in their opinion indicates that destructive ethnic conflicts are not inevitable (Ross and Rothman 1999, p. 4). Thus they refute the claims of primordialists who argue that the intergroup conflicts are rooted in human nature, and therefore resurgence of ethnic conflicts is inevitable.

The instrumentalists attempt to bring attention to understanding the psycho-cultural aspects that influence the behavior of the conflicting parties and hinder further negotiations. Ross (1993, p. 194) clarifies that this approach does not deny that people fight about real interests but he opines that “the intensity of feelings, and the lengths to which disputants go to defend or acquire what they believe is their due are evidence that the pursuit of interests has an important psycho-cultural component which is not yet well understood”. Major work that is crucial to the conflict resolution theory, which rests upon the instrumentalist approach to conflict, is Johan Galtung’s (1996) triadic conceptualization of the root causes of a conflict, of aspects of violence and the appropriate resolution approach attached to each vertex of the triangle, which can be applicable to both symmetric and asymmetric conflicts (Miall 2004).

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<sup>2</sup> The distinction between instrumentalists and primordialists has been made by Esman (1994) in his work *Ethnic Politics*

Galtung (1996) uses a model of ABC triangle to illustrate the root causes of a conflict; in a full-fledged conflict all three – behavior, attitudes and contradictions - have to be present. Behavior (B) is manifested on the “empirical, observed, conscious level” and can be both destructive and constructive reflecting either the efforts of the parties to cooperate or threaten the other, as well as gestures, which could indicate rapprochement or hostility. Galtung (1996) identifies attitudes and contradictions as factors which reside deeper in the “theoretical, inferred, subconscious, latent level” (pg. 72). Attitudes (A) represent assumptions and misperceptions that the parties in conflict hold about the other and of themselves. They have three aspects which mirror what an actor in a conflict is (cognitive aspect), what the actor wants (volatile) and for that reason ought to be and how the actor feels (emotional aspect). Galtung (1996) deems contradictions (C) the main factor, which influences both behavior and the attitudes of the respective parties. Contradictions are the actual or perceived incompatibilities of the interests and goals of the conflicting parties. Ramsbotham et al. (2005, p. 9) quoting Mitchell (1981), clarify that they are a ‘mis-match between social values and social structures’. To this essential triadic model Galtung (1996) ascribes different forms of violence and methods that should be used to handle it. At the B vertex is the most visible, direct form of violence, which can be terminated through peacekeeping<sup>3</sup>. To end the cultural violence, which is connected to attitudes, peacemaking efforts should be employed. In the end in the peace-building phase the aim is to overcome the contradictions that ignite the unintended structural violence, which is “built into the person, social or world spaces” (Galtung 1996, p. 112). In the peace-building phase the aim is to create new structures and new institutions (Galtung 1996).

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<sup>3</sup>In 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his *Agenda for Peace*, made the distinction between peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding to illustrate and differentiate the different efforts and levels of intervention that have to be carried out to manage and resolve conflict successfully and constructively.

*Conflict resolution* theorists thus advocate a long-term involvement in the conflict region and concentrate also on addressing the causes of cultural and structural violence, which are less visible and apparent than direct violence targeted by conflict management. Building furthermore on the work by Edward Azar and John W. Burton from the 1980's, they emphasize the role of human needs and their satisfaction as the root causes and motivating factors of today's conflicts.

Azar believes that the conflicts that emerged after World War II are different in their nature from the conflicts before because they are, in his view, centered on questions of communal identity rather than traditional disputes over territory or economic resources. He defines this phenomenon as protracted social conflict (PSC), which is a "prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition or acceptance, fair access to political institutions, and economic participation" (Azar in Volkan, 1991, p. 93). These conflicts, as he stresses, are not exclusively between communal groups and the state, such conflict can arise between two groups that compete for power. In other words, "fear of marginalization" is the root cause of PSC, which results in forging of and dependency on *ad hoc* alliances of convenience with external actors that can be sucked into the conflict rather than relying on "domestic or communal abilities and resources", which often leads to estrangement of communal groups from decision-making (Azar in Davies and Kaufman 2002, p. 20).

The aim of conflict resolution, in Reimann's (2004) words, is not to eliminate the conflict as such, because conflict, if managed constructively, is in its non-violent form a vital catalyst of social change. Firstly, the destructive violent manifestations of the conflict have to be eliminated in order to progress to the next stage, which is connected with Track II, unofficial or citizens', diplomacy.

International NGOs, practitioners such as Herbert Kelman, Harold Saunder, Joseph Montville and others mentioned above, and influential figures, who are however, not linked directly to official decision-making processes form the second Track of diplomacy. In 1981, in an article by Joseph Montville and William D. Davidson (1981), the term Track II diplomacy was first used to describe the work of non-official representatives as a different layer of diplomatic process. Montville (1981) identifies Track II as an approach to ethnic conflicts that focuses on the psychological barriers that contribute to escalation and protraction of these conflicts. In his article he refers to dialogues and problem-solving workshops already performed by Volkan in Cyprus and Kelman, who was involved in the mediation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Montville (1981) sees the potential of Track II diplomacy as a necessary and useful complement to the official negotiations led by diplomats and other officials, a way to address psychological grievances that create impasses to future change. Track II or citizen's diplomacy, as Edward Kaufman and John Davies (2002, p. 2) specify it could be, in their words, defined as a "bringing together of professionals, opinion leaders or other currently potentially influential individuals from communities in conflict, without official representative status, to work together to understand better the dynamics underlying the conflict and how its transformation from violence to a collaborative process of peace building and sustainable development might be promoted".

Track II practitioners, through problem-solving workshops or dialogues, attempt to "transcend the conflict" by bringing the parties in conflict together and helping them understand and explore their underlying human needs so that they will "reframe" their positions and interests (Miall 2004, Reimann 2004).

These problem-solving workshops are designed to facilitate communication and dialogue among the parties in conflict, which in the private and informal atmosphere of the workshops have space to explore and identify the underlying issues and hindrances to a direct communication that could be conducive to resolution of a conflict. Thus, while government efforts concentrate on achieving a settlement, non-governmental initiatives seldom seek actual brokered settlement, rather their main objective is to “create preconditions that would encourage the parties to negotiate together” (Ross 1999, p. 2) and therefore are instrumental, especially, in the pre-negotiation phase when they can complement the official activities. However, such workshops are carried out throughout duration of the conflict, especially in its latent phase when it has not escalated into violence.

The third party, who supervises the workshops, is represented usually by social scientists or former diplomats who possess expertise in group processes and international conflict and have some knowledge about the conflict region. Ideal participants from the conflicting parties should be middle-range leaders; influential people in their communities, who are not in policy-making positions. The academic and hence non-binding character of these workshops should create a more open atmosphere to overcome political, emotional, psychological or other barriers that many times stall official negotiations and prevent the parties from reaching a mutually acceptable agreement (Kelman 2002, Mitchell and Banks 1996). As has been noted, in this respect, problem-solving workshops could be, ideally, *complementary* to official negotiations, as they provide an alternative venue for finding solutions that could be later communicated to the official leaders. However, there have been several limitations to the success of the workshops. Edward Azar (in Volkan 1991) in his evaluations of the Maryland process, a series of workshops created to bring together parties in conflicts from Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Maldives/Falklands

identifies two main drawbacks to the workshops. First, the participants were unable to move beyond their preconceived notions of the other and only reaffirmed themselves in their attitudes. If, however, somebody's perception of the other party changed, they made an agreement with the other party or they just took part in a meeting with the 'enemy', it could jeopardize their standing with their community or their government. The latter issue, Azar (in Volkan 1991) defines as a 'reentry' problem and believes the facilitators should prepare the participants for this. Second, he observed that the participants generally believed that Track II diplomacy is "less relevant and perhaps damaging to official governmental Track One diplomacy" (Azar in Volkan 1991, p. 114).

More recently, there has been step towards broadening of the resolution activities that would lead to a transformation of a conflict. *Conflict transformation*<sup>4</sup> theorists thus intend to go a step further and propose a more intense involvement of the whole society, including the Third Track, i.e. grassroots leaders and civil society, in conflict resolution. They base their concept on the pyramid model of society developed by John Paul Lederach. Lederach (1997) by dividing the society into three levels in a pyramid and ascribing appropriate conflict resolution method employs a 'holistic' approach to conflict transformation in a given country. The upper level is comprised of the political and military elites of the country. At this level, formal negotiations to arrive at a settlement and end conflict take place. The bottom level, which constitutes the vast majority of the pyramid, includes grassroots communities, who often suffer the most dire consequences in times of conflict and therefore at this level Lederach (1997) proposes local peace commissions and grassroots training. Sandwiched between them, the middle level contains

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<sup>4</sup>There is, however, an internal debate on the distinctiveness of conflict transformation and its place as a separate theory from conflict resolution, for the purposes of my thesis, I will not go deeper into this debate and I will treat conflict transformation as a new, emerging theory that helps redefine and move the conflict resolution field further. For more on the debate see, for example, a comprehensive study by Botes (2003).



“respected elders,” academics, intellectuals, leaders of NGOs, who in Lederach’s (1997) opinion, should serve as an intermediary between the top and the bottom level. So at the middle level, problem-solving workshops and trainings would be appropriate.

Transformation thus does not require only reframing of interests and positions but if necessary also “the very constitution of society that supports continuation of violent conflict” (Miall 2004, 4). In other words every level of society has a role to play and cannot be excluded from the conflict resolution process because an imposed solution from the top may not necessarily be accepted at the other levels, which can create further tensions. Also every level of society is impacted by the conflict and thus the people inside the conflict cannot be viewed as the ‘problem’ and the outside third party as the ‘answer’ (Lederach 1995 in Miall, 2004). The assumption of the conflict transformation proponents is that inclusion of the grassroots or Track III level can serve as a tool for empowerment of the local population, as Reimann (2004) and Botes (2003) explain. In contrast to conflict settlement, whose objective is *status quo ex ante*, conflict transformation, Reimann (2004) believes, supersedes this approach because it views the conflict also as an agent for social justice. Its objectives are both the reframing of hostile attitudes, positions and interests of the parties in conflict and recognition of needs and empowerment of the local societies. Reimann (2004, p. 13) however stresses that to achieve a successful conflict transformation, the practitioners would have to work on “long-term social reconstruction and reconciliation”.

Vayrynen (1991 in Botes 2003, n.p.) introduces a model of conflict transformation, in which he discusses precisely which factors should be transformed. The model is in line with the general idea of conflict transformation being a holistic approach that tries to move beyond resolving one set of issues by advocating long-term, multi-track involvement in a conflict.

Vayrynen (1991 in Botes, 2003) envisions four ways in which transformation should take place. First is *Actor Transformation*, which refers to internal changes in the major parties or emergence of new actors.

[Second], *Issue Transformation* “should alter the political agenda of the conflict, in essence altering what the conflict is about.” [Third], *Rule Transformation* redefines the norms that the actors follow in their interactions with each other, and demarcates the boundaries of their relationship. [And fourth], *Structural Transformation* alludes to changes that may transpire in the system or structure within which the conflict occurs, which is more than just the limited changes among actors, issues and roles. (Vayrynen 1991 quoted in Botes 2003, n.p.)

However, Vayrynen (1991 in Botes 2003) warns as Conflict transformation theorists and practitioners in their attempt to devise a comprehensive tool to redefine conflicts may be overstepping the boundaries of conflict resolution or mitigation and instead move towards general improvement of the whole society.

Nevertheless, through their continuous involvement in conflict areas and unceasing number of workshops and projects, the theorists and practitioners are trying to challenge the traditional approach to conflict resolution and demonstrate that their work matters and can help resolve the conflicts. Mitchell and Banks (1996) view the difference between settlement and resolution in the character of ‘ending’ the violence. They argue that settlement of violent conflict is nothing but a ‘disguised’ victory of only one of the parties, based on the power of their external patron and intervention itself serves the goals of the intervening party and not the parties in conflict, because the compromise that is reached does not address the underlying goals and needs of the parties. Conflict resolution as a problem-solving approach that aims at creating a space for discussion is in their opinion a way to a win-win solution of a conflict. Moreover, because problem-solving views violence as “a problem created by the parties themselves, [it] can

be stopped only by them, because coercive attempts to stop it by external parties cannot be relied upon” (Mitchell and Banks 1996, p. 5).

*Conflict management (or settlement)* has been the traditional, main approach employed to manage conflicts. It essentially rests on the primordialist tradition and views conflict as rooted in the human nature, the political order/status quo in the interests and values of the parties involved. Conflicts, according to this perspective, as it has been noted, cannot be successfully resolved, they can only be managed to avoid the escalation of conflict into violence. The main objective and focus is to achieve a settlement that would transform a zero-sum situation to a sustained non- or positive- sum solution for the parties involved. Such settlement, as Ross (1999, p. 2) reminds may be “no more than a separation of the warring parties”.

The prime actors of conflict management are official representatives, military, political, or religious leaders, in the conflict resolution literature building upon Lederach’s pyramid; the official representatives are labeled as Track I (Miall 2004, Reimann 2004). Track I or official diplomacy refers to “technique of a state action” carried out by professional diplomats, governmental representatives, international organizations or adversarial leaders who act in the capacity of their representative government (Said et al 1979). It is a process “whereby communications from one government go directly to the decision-making apparatus of another” (Said et al 1979: 69). In the process of conflict resolution or settlement, it is only in the capacity of the official representatives to conclude agreements or “to secure agreements of other states [and] it is only by [official] diplomatic means that such assent can be formally registered and communicated” (Said et al 1979, p. 69).

To bring the parties to a political settlement the third actors, official representatives, can use different diplomatic tools as a leverage that would lead to conflict prevention or mitigation.

The conflicts can be peacefully dealt with by “direct negotiation between the parties; various forms of mediation, good offices, and conciliation; and binding forms of third party intervention, e.g. arbitration or adjudication (Bercovitch 2009). The different methods of third party intervention are “distinguished primarily by the degree of power that the intervener exercises over the process and the outcome of the conflict” (Fisher 2001, p. 1).

One of the most commonly applied forms of third party intervention in conflicts is mediation, as Fisher (2001) notes. Moore (1996, p. 15) characterizes mediation as “the intervention of a skilled and impartial intermediary working to facilitate a mutually acceptable negotiated settlement on the issues that are the substance of the dispute between the parties”. In international relations, in the case when a mediator is an official representative of a state or an international organization, the neutrality of a mediator is not a prerequisite and as Bercovitch (2009) notes, some mediators decide to pursue a non-neutral position. However, there is a very fine line between a non-neutral mediator and a mediator who gets sucked into the conflict and becomes, practically, a party to the conflict. This kind of mediation can be performed only by official diplomats, who, as was noted previously, have the capacity to conclude international agreements.

Precisely because it is in the exclusive capacity of official representatives to conclude internationally recognized agreements, conflict resolution positions itself as a necessary and useful complement to the official work. To successfully resolve a conflict, however, they argue that it is necessary for the different tracks to coordinate their efforts.

Nevertheless, since 1981 when Joseph Montville coined the term Track II diplomacy in his article that he co-authored William D. Davidson, the field of conflict resolution has not seen a breakthrough in the need expressed by Montville to find a way for a functioning cooperation

between Track I and Track II diplomacy. Different models have been proposed how to link and coordinate the interventions of third parties and “realize positive synergy between efforts” (Strimling 2006, 98). For example, in 1991, Fisher and Keashly (1991) devised so called “contingency model”, in which they are trying to match the different phases of conflict (discussion, polarization, segregation and destruction) with corresponding third party (official and unofficial) intervention methods (ranging from conciliation to peacemaking) (Fisher and Keashly 1991, Fisher 2001). However, it still remains questionable how willing, both public and private intermediaries, are to cooperate and coordinate their efforts.

Seminal work on the attitude of the official diplomats towards the Track II or unofficial initiatives was written in 1998 by Cynthia Chataway, who in her article presents rather hesitant and negative attitudes towards the unofficial track, seen by the diplomats as “meddlers”. Although, in some instances they agree that the psychological work the Track II diplomacy carries out, trying to change the hostile perceptions can be important and useful, they are very hesitant towards more a closer cooperation and coordination of their efforts. Andrea Strimling (2006) in her article assesses a symposium on the cooperation between Track I and Track II that she organized in 2003. And as Strimling (2006, p. 92) demonstrates, there is a “growing recognition of potential complementarity of “ the work performed by the diplomats and the conflict resolution practitioners, however, such efforts “are often frustrated by differences in interests, assumptions, professional culture and identity, lexicon, and perceptions of relative power”. Therefore, she maintains that effective negotiation between the official and unofficial intermediaries is necessary for cooperation to function successfully. She argues that constructive cooperation between official mediators acting on behalf of their governments and private facilitators, working independently, should progress from communication (or idea sharing)

through coordination (involving synchronizing timing, sharing resources, etc.) and collaboration (i.e. joint design and/or implementation of specific activities) towards integration (of personnel, resources, strategies, operations, and identity).

An example of successful coordination of official and unofficial diplomacy are the pre-negotiation meetings carried out in South Africa between white South Africans and the African National Congress (ANC) during the years 1985-1990. Lieberfeld (2002) concludes that track-two talks not only prepared each side for negotiations by clarifying conflict goals, post-conflict policies, exploring common ground but also contributed to a more favorable public opinion to a possibility that an agreement could be reached. As he states “a sense of South African identity emerged during track-two dialogues which reduced threat perceptions among white participants who communicated with central decisionmakers, and helped create a sense of negotiation possibility” (Lieberfeld 2002, 355). On the other side, Strimling (2006, p. 105) uses increased violence in the Israeli -Palestinian conflict since signing the Oslo Accords as an example of “the dangers associated with negotiated settlements that do not have broad support”.

Along with the call to create “synergetic links” between the different tracks, comes the demand to evaluate the contributions of the work that has been done by Track II diplomacy in the past 40 years (Ross and Rothman eds. 1999, Kaye 2007, Kelman 2008) so that the relatively new field of conflict resolution would be able to build effectively upon the work that has been done and move forward.

In the following chapters I will look at the work of Track II actors in Moldova and Georgia. Based on the empirical evidence, I will assess the contribution of the problem-solving workshops designed to bring together officials and non-governmental actors to an informal setting where they could discuss freely and explore the underlying problems with the aim of

reframing the misperceptions and stereotypes about the other. Also, I will look at the role of INGOs versus local in conflict resolution. First, I turn to the case of conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia.

## CHAPTER 2: CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN GEORGIA

### *2.1 Historical background to the conflict with Abkhazia*

In Georgia, the combination of structural factors embedded in Soviet policies and the political agency of both Georgians and Abkhaz generated conditions, which contributed to escalation of brewing tensions between ethnic Georgians and ethnic Abkhaz in Abkhazia into direct violence.

The policies of nation building and colonization<sup>5</sup> implemented by the leadership of the Soviet Union in early 1920s, through which they administratively parceled the peoples living within USSR according to their official nationalities into Union Republics, Autonomous Regions and Oblasts, led to inner tensions of fighting for nationality rights by the smaller units (Zverev 1996), as was the case also in Abkhazia.

In 1921<sup>6</sup>, Georgia became part of Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. In 1931, Georgia alongside with Azerbaijan and Armenia became titular nations of Union republics created in South Caucasus after the disintegration of the Transcaucasian SFSR in the same year. Abkhazia's status changed from the full republic status, anchored in the 1925 constitution, according to which Abkhazia and Georgia were to be in a federative relationship based on equality of the two republics, to that of an Autonomous republic (ASSR) in 1931, which meant that Abkhazia became subordinate to the Georgian Union republic (Zverev 1996).

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<sup>5</sup>See Hirsch (2000)

<sup>6</sup>After an invasion by Red Army, which ended its 3 years of independence.



Since 1930's until 1950's through the policies of 'Georgianization' of Stalin and Beria, many of ethnic Georgians were resettled to Abkhazia to decrease the numbers of ethnic Abkhaz living in the territory, consequently the Abkhaz<sup>7</sup> became minority in Abkhazia, constituting only 17%, while the Georgian an population counted to almost 50%<sup>8</sup>. The Abkhaz population saw these policies as a threat to the sole existence of their ethnic identity orchestrated by ethnic Georgian nationals in the Soviet leadership through forced assimilation (Nodia 1997). As a result, the Abkhaz elite were sending petitions to the Centre in Moscow in 1956, 1967 and 1978 to integrate Abkhazia into Russia. As a response to their demands, after 1950's many official positions were allocated on a quota basis to the Abkhaz, who constituted a minority. However, these double-sided policies did not help the situation, quite the contrary, created a societal security dilemma between Georgians and Abkhaz, living in Abkhazia, trying to protect their identity, Abkhaz against "Georganisation" and Georgians against "Russification"<sup>9</sup>. Both societies exercised different ways of leverage and took different non-military measures to protect their societal identity, resulting in spiral of moves and counter-moves, which escalated into an intercommunal violence in 1989, between ethnic Georgians and Abkhaz living in Sukhumi, following a mass rally in Lykhny where some 30 000 Abkhaz reiterated the demand that Abkhazia should secede from Georgia and be granted a union republic status (Zverev 1999, Kaufman 2001).

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<sup>7</sup>Georgian and Abkhaz are two distinct ethnic groups, the Abkhaz language is part of the Circassian family, which makes them kin to the North Caucasian Peoples. ( Nodia 1997)

<sup>8</sup>As of: before the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Herrberg 2006)

<sup>9</sup>Georgians perceived these issues and intercommunal conflicts with the Abkhaz through the prism of their relationship with Russia and what they believed to be Russian effort to rule the Union republics through the Byzanthian principle *divido et impere* (Nodia 1997, Lynch 2004). As Ghia Nodia (1997) argues, the anti-Abkhaz feelings shared by Georgians were not as strong as the anti-Georgian sentiments, because for Georgians the real enemy was Russia and they did not see a real threat to their security coming from the Abkhaz alone, rather from the policies of Moscow.

However, as Cornell (2002, p. 253) rightly points out, the ethnic grievances of the Abkhaz population and nationalist sentiments contributed to the ethnic mobilization and subsequent conflict in Abkhazia, but “without political autonomy Abkhaz political elite would not have had the necessary institutions – such as the Supreme Soviet of the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic – with which to legitimately decide on secession from Georgia” and gain military support in war from Moscow through the channels of Supreme Soviet and from the North Caucasian people.

In Abkhazia, after Ardzinba came to power, a new election law of 1990 was adopted, which gave way to a parliament in which 17% of the Abkhaz population enjoyed 43% majority with 28 seats out of 65<sup>10</sup>. The new parliament was elected along these lines in the fall of 1991. The newly elected Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, negotiated and endorsed the new electoral law. Due to his “nationalistic and personalistic” policies, he soon faced an opposition from Georgians in Tbilisi (Lynch 2004, p. 198). After the suppression of student demonstrations in Tbilisi in September 1991, the opposition organized a military coup in the winter 1991-1992 and deposed him from power (Lynch 2004). As a consequence, the Abkhaz parliament split into Abkhaz-led and Georgian-led factions (Cornell 2002).

Amidst the political turmoil, Georgia declared independence in April 1991, and reinstated constitution from 1921, which did not provide for any separate status of Abkhazia. The international community soon afterward recognized the independence of Georgia, along with other former Union Republics. In the summer of 1991, Abkhaz Supreme Soviet reinstated the constitution from 1925, which defined the relationship between Georgia and Abkhazia as a federation based on equality between the two republics (Herrberg 2006).

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<sup>10</sup> Georgian ethnic majority was assigned 26 seats

Conflict erupted in August 1992, when Georgian forces entered Abkhazia under the pretext of protecting Abkhaz railways and highways against guerilla insurgents that supported Gamsakhurdia. Eduard Shevardnadze had only little control of the government and military forces; the official mission led by warlord Kitovani soon spun out of control<sup>11</sup> and escalated into violence, when Kitovani moved to Sukhumi determined to take military control of the whole territory and restore the Georgian territorial integrity (Coppieters 2004, Nodia 1997).

At first Kitovani was progressing steadily further to the northern coast of Abkhazia. In 1992 Russia brokered ceasefire between the conflicting parties, however, new hostilities resumed. A rapid shift in the course of the events came with the overt military support of Abkhaz troops by the military forces from North Caucasus<sup>12</sup> and Russia<sup>13</sup>, which succeeded in pushing the Georgian forces back. Another ceasefire was signed on July 27, 1993 between Georgia and Abkhaz *de facto* government. The UN peacekeeping forces that were deployed in the region to observe its implementation had to suspend their mission, after a surprise Abkhaz offensive in September 1993, which finally ended the war in October 1993 resulting in the Abkhaz victory (Nodia 1997, Lynch 2004, UNOMIG 2009).

Nodia (1997, 38) opines that Shevardnadze wanted “a Moscow-brokered end to the war so badly that he deceived himself by signing deals that proved disastrous for Georgia”. The agreements from 1992 and 1993, resulted first in the loss of Gagra and the border with Russia, and then in the loss of Sukhumi. After several rounds of negotiations chaired by Secretary General’s Special Envoy, the parties signed two declarations that anchor on the one hand the

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<sup>11</sup>As Kitovani himself states in a documentary *Absence of Will* (2009) made by Studio Re

<sup>12</sup>Confederation of Caucasian Mountainous People

<sup>13</sup>Russia, because of its internal divisions, supported militarily both parties to the conflict. Abkhazia lost a significant leverage on the politics in Moscow, when Yeltsin arrested vice-president Rutskoi and other opposition leaders in the parliament (Coppieters 1999).

resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia and on the other the situation of IDPs – some 300 000 mostly ethnic Georgians who fled their homes to escape the hostilities of war<sup>14</sup>. On April 4<sup>th</sup> 1994, the warring parties signed the quadripartite agreement on a “Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons” and on May 14, 1994 Declaration “On the activities of political resolution of the conflict between Georgians and Abkhaz”. Both parties agreed to deployment of a CIS peacekeeping force constituting of Russian soldiers, which had been operating along with a UN unarmed force (UNOMIG 2009) deployed to observe the implementation of the ceasefire and monitor the operations of the CIS peacekeepers (Zakareishvili n.d.; UNOMIG 2009).

## ***2. 2 Further dynamic and conflict resolution efforts: Role of Track I***

The UN launched in 1994 the so called Geneva Process of negotiations under the auspices of Special Representative of Secretary-General (SRSG). The Geneva process thus created a forum where political issues between Abkhazia and Georgia could be consulted on a multilateral level with Russia as the main facilitator (Socor 2004). As Ambassador Gyarmati stated in the interview conducted on May 18, 2010, in the period after the war there was a general readiness between the parties to the conflict to find a workable solution. However, as he emphasized, there was no strong push from the West to resolve the conflict. Nodia (1997, p. 49) believes that for Russia “keeping the conflict unresolved seem[ed] to be the only way to keep Georgia [and Abkhazia] in check, even to a degree”. As Socor, points out Russia soon convinced Abkhazia to withdraw from the multilateral negotiations. The negotiations between Georgia and

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<sup>14</sup> Abkhazia has been largely depopulated as a result of the war, but also due to its ongoing policies that deny the return of the refugees fearing that the Abkhaz might again constitute a minority if the Georgian refugees return to their homes. Only the Georgians from the Gali region have been permitted to come back (Coppieters 2004).

Abkhazia were resumed in Moscow on a bilateral basis “despite Georgian protest” and unopposed by the UN, which had initiated the Geneva process. Russia was even admitted as a member of Friends of Georgia, alongside England, France, Germany, a self-proclaimed group of western states established by the US (Socor 2004).

In 1997<sup>15</sup>, Special Representative of Secretary-General Liviu Bota reinvigorated the Geneva process chaired by the UN, which now included besides Georgia, Abkhazia, Russia, which was still the main facilitator, also envoys from countries that formed “Friends of Georgia” (including Russia), and OSCE. The meetings led to establishment of Coordination Council<sup>16</sup>, which institutionalized the Geneva process in order to guarantee that the issue of the status of Abkhazia would be negotiated in this format. It became the key negotiation platform for the efforts to resolve the conflict in the period between 1997 and 2001, however failed to produce any concrete results (Socor 2004).

In 2001, Abkhazia ceased to participate in the meetings of the Coordination Council; the meetings were resumed only in May 2006. However, after President Saakashvili launched a military operation in July 2006 and established Abkhaz government-in-exile in Kodori Gorge<sup>17</sup>, the meetings of Coordination Council ultimately terminated (Abkhazia- Path to War 2009).

In 2003 at the meeting in Sochi, a parallel format to the Geneva process, known as Sochi process, was established by Putin and Shevardnadze. According to Socor (2004), Putin pushed Shevardnadze to establish this Georgian-Abkhaz-Russian framework for confidence building, return of IDPs and economic recovery. The promising multilateral platform established by

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<sup>15</sup> In the same year President of Abkhazia Ardzinba and Shevardnadze signed an agreement on the non-resumption of hostilities

<sup>16</sup> The Coordination Council consisted of three working groups, whose activities were directed at conflict resolution, return of IDPs and economic and social recovery

<sup>17</sup> Kodori Gorge was a security zone under the auspices of UNOMIG and CIS peacekeeping forces and the only Georgian administered region in Abkhazia until August 12, 2008.

Geneva process and continued with the work of Coordination Council was thus abandoned and the bilateral platform left Georgia to negotiate with Russia and Abkhazia alone. This shift undermined, in Socor's (2004) view the Georgian argument that the Geneva process was the only viable option for a constructive and successful resolution of the conflict.

A major shift in Georgia's approach to resolving the conflicts with its breakaway regions came with the Rose Revolution in November 2003. Shevardnadze resigned after mass demonstrations against the rigged parliamentary elections. Saakashvili, the leader of the Rose Revolution, assumed office with the agenda of restoring territorial integrity of Georgia and adapting Georgia to EU and NATO standards aiming for accession to both organizations (Strachota 2008). According to Strachota (2008) Saakashvili's strategy to regain full jurisdiction over the breakaway regions was four-fold: internationalization of the problem of para-states; taking constructive political and legislative measures towards para-states to create the image of a responsible state; undermining political control of the para-states' authorities over their territories; building a strong army. Saakashvili's more aggressive policies aimed at reintegrating both breakaway regions led to escalation of the conflict with Abkhazia in 2006 when the strained relations between the breakaway regions on the one hand and Russia on the other became more tense after the military operation in Kodori Gorge. The situation was further exacerbated by Saakashvili's pro-American leaning and efforts to join NATO.

In June 2006, the presidents of the internationally non-recognized entities of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria held a meeting in Sukhumi. At the meeting, Abkhazia's President Sergei Bagapsh, South Ossetia's Eduard Kokoity and Transnistria's Igor Smirnov signed two joint declarations in which they agreed to support each other in their calls for independence and declared Russia the only guarantor of peace and security in the region. They also established

Commonwealth for Democracy and Rights of Nations, with the aim of acquiring international recognition (RFE/RL 2007). The three presidents met also in November 2007 where they pledged to continue political cooperation aimed at “preventing the tensions endangered by Georgia from erupting into full-scale conflict” (Eurasianet 2007)<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, the protracted conflict escalated into a full-blown war in August 2008 between Georgia and Russia. The August war took place on the territory of South Ossetia and after five days of fighting ended in Russian victory and unilateral recognition of the two breakaway regions by Russia<sup>19</sup>.

## 2.2. 1 Track I proposals

### *UN Proposal: The Boden document (2001)*

In 2001, SRSB Dieter Boden presented a solution to the frozen conflict entitled "Basic Principles on the Distribution of Competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi," on which he worked together with Friends of the Secretary General and Coordination Council, and which became known as the Boden Document. Coppieters (2004) argues that the document was intended to serve as a compromise solution between the UN and Russia, leaving it up to Georgia and Abkhazia to settle down and solve the minute details of statebuilding and institutional questions. Therefore the proposal only lays out a framework for flexible international

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<sup>18</sup> For details see: <<http://dev.eurasianet.org/resource/georgia/hypermail/200711/0010.shtml>> last accessed May 29, 2010

<sup>19</sup> For the purposes of my thesis I will not go into details of the 5-day war

negotiations on the problematic issues of the statute of Abkhazia and its position *vis a vis* Georgia.

Dieter Boden<sup>20</sup> in his eight principles provides for a federative constitution, which on the one hand recognizes the territorial integrity of Georgia and its demand for a return of IDPs to Abkhazia and on the other, the sovereign status of Abkhazia within the federal structure. As Coppieters importantly notes, “Abkhazia is not defined as being part of Georgia in the sense that Sukhumi would be subordinate to Tbilisi” quite the contrary, they would “both derive their powers from the federal constitution”(Coppieters 2004, 204), which could be amended or changed only by mutual consent of the two parties (Boden document, principle 3) .

The proposal was not accepted by the Abkhaz side, which objected to its reintegration into Georgia. Georgia welcomed the favorable position of Russia towards the document and accepted the plan for the sake of compromise (ICG 2007).

It has to be noted that Socor believes that in 2006 Russia had been silently supporting Abkhazia’s decision not to agree with the concept. In January 2006, at the meeting of the UN Security Council, Russia withheld its support from a solution to the conflict based on Abkhazia's status within the state of Georgia and declared the Boden document no longer appropriate as a framework for negotiations on the status of Abkhazia. This step, according to Socor (2006) swept away from the table the only platform for international negotiations on the status of Abkhazia. It was also a step to confront EU’s probable more serious involvement in the region at that time, as Dieter Boden was to become the new EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus (Socor 2006).

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<sup>20</sup>Full version available online at < [http://smr.gov.ge/en/abkhazia/documents/bodens\\_document](http://smr.gov.ge/en/abkhazia/documents/bodens_document) > last accessed May 20, 2010



***Abkhaz Proposal: Key to the Future (2006)***

In 2005, the Georgian government accepted a resolution to craft a peace plan regarding the conflict with Abkhazia by May 1, 2006; however, they had not succeeded in doing so. Abkhazia cleverly took advantage of the Georgian failure when Bagapsh revealed their own plan "Comprehensive Resolution of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict"<sup>21</sup> or "Key to the Future" on May 4, 2006, which was subsequently accepted by the Parliament on May 7.

The Abkhaz side in the document contends that the peace plan "consists of measures for restoring trust", for which the main prerequisite is the recognition of Abkhaz independence by the Georgia and the international community. Secondly, they demand that the Georgian side apologize for "the state policy of assimilation, war and isolation" and lift the economic blockade imposed on Abkhazia<sup>22</sup> because it aggravates the economic situation and living conditions of the Abkhaz people. They also voiced their dissatisfaction with the efforts of the Georgian government to "expel Russia from the peacekeeping process", which in their view demonstrates Georgia's intention to "internationalize the peacekeeping forces in the conflict zones". This action would only reaffirm Abkhaz fear that Georgia would consider using force to settle the conflict, the proposal reads. The insistence of Bagapsh on recognition of Abkhaz independence

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<sup>21</sup> Full text available online <[http://www.caucasus-dialog.net/Caucasus-Dialog/Documents\\_files/Key%20to%20the%20Future%20Eng%20Kopie.pdf](http://www.caucasus-dialog.net/Caucasus-Dialog/Documents_files/Key%20to%20the%20Future%20Eng%20Kopie.pdf)> last accessed May 20, 2010

<sup>22</sup> The blockade was imposed by CIS in 1996

no only resulted in Georgian rejection of the peace plan, but also led to “sharp exchange between [Bagapsh] and visiting members of NATO Parliamentary Assembly on May 6” (Fuller 2006).

Nevertheless, the peace plan also called for “[t]he process of economic integration in the Black Sea region and prospects for more intensive economic and regional cooperation within the framework of the ‘European Union’s broad neighborhood strategy’”, which could be guarantees of the commitment of both sides to building good neighborly relations. But as Kaufmann (2009) notes, the Abkhaz openness towards the EU did not lead to practical reform efforts of such crucial areas as the rule of law, corruption, or government administration that would show a serious Abkhaz commitment. The intention to cooperate more closely within EU structures and Black Sea region was welcomed by Zakareishvili, who renders it an important step and saw it as a sign they wish to move away from Russia, which was mentioned in the text only once in the connection with peacekeeping forces. Interestingly, Zaal Anjaparidze (2006) in his article from May 10, regarded the politics of Abkhazia as a “slide towards Russia”, underlining the statement by Bagapsh, who said after the release of the Abkhaz proposal that “Abkhazia will develop relations with Russia whether the international community likes it or not”.

### ***Georgian Proposal: Road Map (2006)***

Georgian response to the Abkhaz peace plan came two months later, in June 2006, when Irakli Alasania, the Georgian President’s aide for Abkhaz conflict issues presented a “road map” for the peace process with Abkhazia. The proposal was based on five main principles: territorial integrity of the Georgian republic and its willingness to negotiate granting internal sovereignty to

Abkhazia; organized return of IPDs to Abkhazia<sup>23</sup>; non-resumption of hostilities; a favorable attitude towards “the direct participation of international and regional organizations in the conflict resolution process”(Civil.Ge 2006) and finally the need for a joint action plan that would be a basis for a stage-by-stage conflict resolution process (Civil.Ge 2006).

And even though it diverged from the Abkhaz proposal on the major issue of the question of Abkhaz independence, it similarly proposed “consultations on the ‘involvement of Abkhazia in European regional institutes and projects, including the European Union Neighborhood Policy, and the Black Sea cooperation Process’” (Kaufman 2009, p. 3).

The latter principle mirrored the general atmosphere of hopeful reconciliation between Georgia and Abkhazia that lasted from December 2005 until the incidents in Kodori Gorge in the summer of 2006. As Zakareishvili (Absence of Will 2009) explains December 2005 was a good month for relations with both breakaway regions – Abkhazia and South Ossetia. South Ossetian President Kokoity agreed to negotiate with Georgia on the peace proposal that the Georgian side offered<sup>24</sup> and consequently the negotiations, which in Zakareishvili’s (Absence of Will 2009) opinion were rather successful, went on throughout the month. In the same month, an agreement was reached for a meeting between the Abkhaz president, Bagapsh and Saakashvili. Irakli Alasania was leading negotiations with Sergei Shamba, Abkhaz Foreign Minister and he managed to gain trust of Abkhazia during the top-level negotiations. However, when Shamba accepted the invitations and came for an official visit to Tbilisi<sup>25</sup>, Saakashvili instead of meeting with Sergei Shamba decided to visit the Senaki military base, what in Zakareishvili’s (Absence

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<sup>23</sup> Not only in the Gali District as proposed by the Abkhaz side

<sup>24</sup> In the proposal “South Ossetia Peace Initiative”, Georgia offers autonomy to South Ossetia , the proposal however, was rejected by South Ossetia in the end

<sup>25</sup>He also presented the Abkhaz proposal “Key to the Future”

of Will 2009) opinion, was a sign of Saakashvili's weakness and belief that "negotiations were humiliating" (Absence of Will 2009).

However, after the events in Kodori Gorge, Abkhazia directed its foreign policy fully towards Russia. Georgia also diverged from the EU path and turned its foreign policy orientation fully towards NATO and the US<sup>26</sup>, what also meant a shift from Europeanization of the conflict regions to "internationalization of the conflicts in order [...] to ward off Russian aggression with the help of US and NATO" (Kaufman 2009, p. 3).

Georgia drafted and released another proposal in March 2008 along similar lines as the 'road map'. From the one in 2006, it differed in the proposition to create economic zones in the regions Ochamcharia and Gali, which belonged to the breakaway region of Abkhazia (Civil.Ge 2008). The Abkhaz leadership rejected the plan arguing that those were only empty words of Saakashvili, whose main aim was to please the Western governments and gain their support (RFE/RL 2008).

In Lynch's (2004) opinion, it is futile to assert that any self-proclaimed authority would agree to a federal agreement that essentially transforms political questions into legal questions. As he emphasizes that "self-declared states have no faith in the rule of law as a means to guarantee their security" and he refers to the period in 1990's when "the separatist regions experienced how new laws enacted in the metropolitan capitals were used as weapons against them" (Lynch 2004, p. 60).

### **2.3 Role of track II**

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<sup>26</sup> Ambassador Gyarmati (Pers. comm, May 28, 2010) believes that "putting all eggs in the US basket" was a crucial mistake by Saakashvili

As Liana Kvarchelia (2010, p. 4) stresses “non-governmental peacebuilding initiatives were carried out exclusively by western NGOs”. The organization such as Berghof Research Center, Conciliation Resources or International Alert have been in the region since mid 1990s and have carried out considerable amount of work aimed at bringing the influential people from both sides together hoping to reach out on the one hand to the governments and on the other to the domestic societies. However, in contrast to Moldova, where there are very strong ties between the two populations, in Georgia and Abkhazia, the meetings mainly resurfaced the convictions, aspirations and interests of the both parties.

Berghof Research Center together with London-based Conciliation Resources carried out between 1997 and 2007 a series of some twenty dialogues at the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Stadtschlaining, hence the name Schlaining process. The forum followed the concept of problem-solving workshops, which brought together influential figures from both societies to discuss the roots of the conflict and possibilities of its resolution in an unofficial setting<sup>27</sup>. Besides discussions, the participants had a chance to attend lectures by experts from other countries mired by ethnic conflicts so that they could compare and contrast the situation and options for Georgia and Abkhazia.

Other initiatives were developed on the basis of Schlaining process, such as Discussion pack, Informal Group of Experts and Round table. Discussion pack contains recommendations on how to structure the dialogue between the representatives from Georgia and Abkhazia. The Informal Group of Experts drafted a proposal on the federative constitution of Georgia and

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<sup>27</sup> The participants were carefully selected by the local coordinators (Paata Zakareishvili on the Georgian side and Manana Gurgulia on the Abkhaz side), who had to consult the choices of participants with their respective governments. Moreover, the Abkhaz side had a privilege to decide also about the composition of the Georgian groups, so, for example, IDPs or representatives of the government-in-exile were for a long time denied participation in the dialogues (Wolleh 2006)

Abkhazia that was to be presented in 2004 to the National Security Council. The Round Table that took place in April 2004 was organized by Berghof Research Center and Conciliation Resources with the aim to create an informal forum for representatives of the European countries and representatives of Georgia and Abkhazia, where they could discuss the possible options of resolution to the protracted conflict (Wolleh 2006).

The Schlaining process designed for the participants from Georgia and Abkhazia was solely an independent venture and even though its participants have also been official representatives of both governments, i.e. advisors to the presidents, ministers from both sides, representatives of Coordination Council, they participated as private individuals and not in their official capacity, as Susan Stewart (2004) emphasizes.

Oliver Wolleh (2006), who was in charge of the Schlaining process, states in his report that the dialogue seminars had more significance for the Abkhaz delegations, as they served as indirect communication channels with the international community and Georgia for that matter, because as an unrecognized entity they had only limited access to information and international actors. It has to be noted that even though the participants were regarded as acting in their personal capacity (Stewart 2004), the dialogue seminars necessarily became politicized. For both entities, and especially for Abkhazia, opinions divergent from the official stance of the government could pose a risk for the credibility of their demands. Involving a wider spectrum of participants in the dialogues on the one hand attempted to show the commitment to democratization of the country, but on the other, opinions of civil society that differed from the official claim for independence could undermine the seriousness of the Abkhaz demand and commitment of the whole society to this cause (Wolleh 2006). The political significance of these dialogues to the Georgian was rather marginal, since they view the Abkhaz side as a puppet in

the hands of Russia and do not trust in the genuineness of the Abkhaz demands for self-determination (Wolleh 2006). Moreover, there is a high level of mistrust on the side of government, especially after Saakashvili assumed the office, towards the independent and non-governmental initiatives as they are critical of or in opposition to the hardline policies of the current leadership (Zakareishvili 2010, pers. Comm., May 20). And as Liana Kvarchelia (2010) stresses, Saakashvili even prevented Georgian officials from participating in the Schlaining process.

The Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue seminars thus served only as an important information sharing hub, and a place to forge and develop contacts with the broader society, however „their tangible impact on the political situation has been extremely low“ (Stewart 2004, p. 18).

Conciliation Resources (CR) have been involved in the region since 1997 and throughout this time they have carried out and established different projects focusing on the areas of civil society building, empowerment of the marginalized groups<sup>28</sup>, democratization and conflict resolution. Many CR projects are directed at reframing the public opinion in Abkhazia and Georgia about the conflict and the stereotypes the people hold about the other. For example, in cooperation with Studio Re, an independent Georgian-based TV station they are organizing public debates, TV discussions, or Georgian-Abkhaz co-production documentary films (Conciliation Resources n.d.). Zakareishvili (2010, pers. comm. May 20) regards the work of Studio Re in this respect very important because as he explains, the documentaries and TV discussions try to go deep into the roots of the conflict. The producers invite experts, researchers who discuss the issues pertaining to the roots of the conflict, the resolution efforts, and the role of Georgia and propose recommendations how to move forward. However, Stewart (2004) points

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<sup>28</sup>Supporting the network of IDPs and Abkhaz NGOs

out that these activities, such as documentaries by Studio Re or other, attract only small viewership and thus a very limited impact on the society. CR also used to organize annual summer university for young people in international relations, governance and conflict transformation in Pitsunda, Abkhazia (Kvarchelia 2010).

International Alert is yet another organization that has been working in the field on conflict resolution between Georgia and Abkhazia since 1997. Their activities include direct support to the civil society, IDPs and dialogue between civil society representatives from Georgia and Abkhazia (International Alert n.d.).

Paata Zakareishvili (2010 pers. comm., May 20) emphasizes that after the Rose Revolution when Saakashvili became president, the links between the two tracks and between experts in Abkhazia and Georgia became weaker and now after the war non-existent. On the other hand, there is a strong network and cooperation inside Track II<sup>29</sup> in the respective regions, as Zakareishvili stated. University of California Irvine<sup>30</sup> has been organizing informal constructive dialogues for experts from Georgia since 1995. The Georgian participants still meet once or twice a year to discuss the current issues and developments in the conflict resolution without any presence of Abkhaz experts or a third party. They publish regular reports from those meetings called “Aspects of Georgian-Abkhaz conflict”, which should serve as recommendations for politicians and incentives for dialogue, as Zakareishvili explained in the interview on May 10, 2010.

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<sup>29</sup>It is very well documented by Nan and Garb (2006)

<sup>30</sup>Under the leadership of Paula Garb, who was later joined by Susan Allen Nan from George Mason University. Later these dialogues were carried out under the auspices of Heinrich Boll Foundation and Conciliation Resources (Kvarchelia 2010).



### 2.3.1 Track II Proposals

#### *Concept on the Special Status of Abkhazia in the Georgian State (2004)*

The concept was a project that was to be presented to the Georgian National Council; its completion was even demanded by then President Shevardnadze in 2003, as Zakareishvili (2010 pers. comm., May 20) states. Zakareishvili was one of the five members<sup>31</sup> of The Informal Group of Experts that worked on drafting the proposal. Wolleh (2006) explains in his report on the Georgian-Abkhaz Dialogue that the preparation works began already at the informal dialogues and workshops led by Berghof Center and CR.

The Concept uses Boden document and the Georgian Constitution adopted in 1995 as its main framework and envisions a federal constitution for the two entities anchored in the “principle of distribution of ‘state sovereignty’ between the sovereign federal state and the member-subjects”, which enjoy “domestic sovereignty”. It recognizes the specific claims of the Abkhaz to the territory that both Georgians and Abkhaz claim to be their ancient homeland. It provides for equal status of Georgians and Abkhaz living in both entities, i.e. neither should in the respective territory have the status of national minority. The Concept also suggest that the Abkhaz should have a right to participate in foreign relations, conclude agreements with foreign states in the spheres of culture, commerce, and trade<sup>32</sup>.

The concept, even though, requested by the president, has never been accepted. As the leaders changed after the Rose Revolution and a new more aggressive and pro-active policy of

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<sup>31</sup>The experts were solely from Georgia, there was no cooperation with Abkhaz experts or researchers.

<sup>32</sup>Full version of the Concept available online: <http://zakareishvili.com/pdf/concefciaen.pdf>

Saakashvili started being implemented towards Abkhazia, the Concept was swept away. Nevertheless, as Zakareishvili (2010 pers. comm., May 20) and Wolleh (2006) emphasize, its promotion in the media created a very important incentive for a general debate on the conflict resolution and status of Abkhazia among the wide Georgian public at times when a new strategy for Abkhazia was neither accepted nor even drafted yet.

### ***Zones of Peace (2008)***

Already in September 2008, at a symposium at Cornell University and later at George Mason University, a group of academics and conflict resolution practitioners<sup>33</sup> talked about their vision of “Peace Zones”<sup>34</sup> as a way to resolve the conflicts in South Caucasus.

Peace Zones as a concept are “geographical areas where attempts are being made to limit violence by promoting peace, as well as tolerance between ethnicities and religions”. The authors of Peace Zones in Caucasus claim that such initiative is feasible in the region referring to the post-war reconstruction and integration of Europe, as a case in point. They propose gradual transformation of the whole South Caucasus into a weapon-free, demilitarized zone with strong economic network and cooperation between the countries, emphasizing that similar economic cooperation was thriving in the past in Egret or Sadakhlo.

The idea of “Peace Zones” has been on the table since 2001, when John McDonald, the president of Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, started working on it with a writer and an

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<sup>33</sup>Susan Allen Nan, an Assistant Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University; Irakli Kakabadze, who teaches Peace Studies at Cornell University; Arsen Kharatyan, a founding member of the youth movements Sksela and Hima; Jamila Mammadova, a South Caucasus Program Officer at the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy; Ekaterina Romanova, a Ph.D. Candidate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University

<sup>34</sup>Full text available at <<http://www.alplus.am/en/politics/2009/02/19/caucasus>> last accessed May 20, 2010

opposition activist from Georgia, Irakli Kakabadze. McDonald during his diplomatic work in Georgia developed contacts with the high-level decision-makers in Georgia, to whom he outlined his plan of creating Peace Zones in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2003, he presented the plan to Shevardnadze, who in McDonald's account wanted to endorse it, however, after the Rose Revolution when Saakashvili replaced Shevardnadze in the presidential seat, the initiative of Kakabadze and McDonald has not progressed further (A Practical Vision for Solving Georgia-Russia Crisis 2008).

Its possible success, however, remains elusive in my opinion, as several aspects have to be taken into account. First, since 2001, McDonald has not been able to raise money to initiate the implementation of the project. Second, in his account, he only mentions favorable attitude towards the idea from Georgian politicians<sup>35</sup>, he fails to address the possible reaction of the Abkhaz side, which had been demanding full-fledged independence. Thirdly, the lobbying power might be further diminished by the fact that Irakli Kakabadze has been criticizing the policies of Saakashvili, which puts him in a difficult bargaining position.

Moreover, the propositions of the initiative, which was made public again one month after the 2008 war, which stirred a debate on Russia resurgent, raises a crucial question about the essence of conflict resolution theory – should its proponents hold on to the ideal types or should they concentrate on providing constructive and realistic assessment of the situation and propose feasible initiatives that the governments could assent to and negotiate their implementation? I believe that this issue, although not directly tackled in my thesis, should be kept in mind when evaluating the work of Track II actors and the attitudes of the governmental representatives towards them.

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<sup>35</sup> See: A Practical Vision for Solving Georgia-Russia Crisis (2008)

In the following chapter I will look at how unofficial interventions played out in Moldova, which in the resolution literature<sup>36</sup>, is heralded as one of the few successful cases where Track II contributed to a continuation of official negotiations and drafting official proposals.

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<sup>36</sup>See: Fisher (2006)

## CHAPTER 3: CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN MOLDOVA

### *3.1 Historical background to the conflict with Transnistria*

Moldova, similarly to Georgia, is also mired by a protracted internal conflict with its breakaway region since the break-up of the Soviet Union. In contrast to Georgia, however, the minorities that rose up against the nationalistic leadership of Moldova did not belong to a titular nationality in an autonomous unit; rather they were a conglomerate of non-Moldovan minority groups that territorialized their demands (Kolsto 2002).

The frozen conflict has been hindering the development of the country since 1992, when a war broke out between Moldova and the Transnistrian region, which laid its claims for territorial independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The territory of present Moldova, formerly known as Bessarabia, lies between Romania and Ukraine. The two regions separated by the Dniester River - Moldova and Transnistria – were first time brought under a common rule only in 1812, when they were annexed by Russia. In the tumultuous period of Russian Revolution, Bessarabia slipped again under the rule of Romania and Transnistria remained under Russian control (Lynch 2004). In October 1924, the region east of the Dniester – today's Transnistria and parts of today's Ukraine – was incorporated by the Soviet Union and the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was established as a part of Ukrainian Soviet. For a brief period Moldova and Transnistria united again when they were incorporated into Ukrainian Soviet under the terms of Motov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Pact, however, lost its effect when Romania declared war on Soviet Union and with

the help of German troops, regained control over Bessarabia. Between 1941 and 1944, Moldovan Union Republic thus came under the rule of Romania; however, the peace treaty signed in 1947 restored the borders from 1941 (Freire 2003, Vahl and Emerson 2004).

The territorial factor has played a role in declaring Transnistrian claim for independence. And as Andrew Williams<sup>37</sup> (1999) observed at the problem-solving workshops that took place after the war the general belief of the participants from Transnistria was that they deserved more independence than was being offered to them in the various proposals. They argued that the region of current Transnistria had been a part of Ukrainian SSR until amalgamated by the USSR with the Romanian province of present Moldova in 1940. So, they point out that before 1940 they had not been “a part of a state linguistically or ethnically dominated by Romania, but rather had a Slavic, and more specifically Russian and Ukrainian view of the world” (Williams 1999, 79).

The violent conflict of 1992 was brewing since late 1980’s when the language question was brought up. After 1945, during the ‘sovietization’ of the right bank, the Soviet leadership that replaced the Moldovan elites, implemented policies that tried to rewrite the history claiming the uniqueness of Moldova and its non-Romanian identity, in an attempt to institutionalize a separate Moldovan nationality of the Moldovan Union Republic. The alphabet was changed to Cyrillic and new institutions were created to bring up brand new Moldovan elite. In 1989, already prominent Popular Front<sup>38</sup> demanded the re-introduction of the Latin script and establishment of Romanian as the state language (Lynch 2004). In August the same year, the Supreme Soviet of Moldova adopted three new language laws, which amended the Constitution

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<sup>37</sup>Andrew Williams was a facilitator from Center for Conflict Analysis of the Kent University.

<sup>38</sup> Popular Front stemmed from the merger of a reformist movement, Moldovan Democratic Movement in Support of Perestroika composed of teachers, journalists and writers and the national Moldovan movement (Vahl and Emerson 2004).

so that Moldovan became the state language using Latin script<sup>39</sup> and Russian only a language used for inter-ethnic communication, thus not acquiring Constitutional character parallel to Moldovan “despite being the most widely spoken tongue in the Republic” (Freire 2003, p. 197). Dissatisfaction from non-Moldovan/Romanian minorities and mass meetings and violent protests staged by Ukrainians and Russians ensued (Freire 2003, Vahl and Emerson 2004). The requirements of the language laws, strengthening of the Popular Front contributed to the fears of the “highly sovietized and russophone population” of Transnistria that Moldova might move towards integration with Romania (Lynch 2004, p. 32). As in Abkhazia, in the state of insecurity, the factory directors and political elite increasingly appealed to the Soviet center (Lynch 2004).

Nevertheless as Lynch (2004) points out, the roots of the conflict were political and economic. In 1980’s, new Moldovan elite rose to power and began to challenge the power of Transnistrian elites, who had been governing the Moldovan Union Republic until then (Lynch 2004). Moreover, “Moldova’s movement toward political and economic independence threatened Transnistrian control of local industries and subsidies that the factories on the left bank received from Moscow” (Lynch 2004, p. 33). In the 1980’s then, there was a clear distinction between the industrialized and “sovietized” left bank and more agricultural and “Moldovan” right bank (Lynch 2004).

### ***3.2 The war and the subsequent official conflict resolution efforts: Role of Track I***

In 1990, the idea of unification with Romania was heavily supported among the members of the Popular Front, which won 40% of votes in the elections that took place in March. As a result of the policies and the mood in the country, the local authorities in Transnistria proclaimed

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<sup>39</sup>The laws acknowledged the unity of Moldovan and Romanian language (Vahl and Emerson 2004)

Dnestr Moldovan Republic on September 2, 1990, which was not recognized by Moldova (Vahl and Emerson, 2004). By early 1991, the idea of unification started to lose its support, as the majority of the Moldovan elite began to endorse a ‘two state’ doctrine based on strong cultural ties with Romania. Subsequently, Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) proclaimed independence from USSR on June 25, 1991 and was internationally recognized as Republic of Moldova on August 27, 1991. Five days later, the Transnistrian Supreme Soviet voted to join the Soviet Union (Vahl and Emerson, 2004).

First intermittent violent clashes between Transnistrians and Moldovan police appeared already in November 1990 however, the main fighting took place in March 1992. As in Abkhazia, Russian military support<sup>40</sup> played a crucial role in the war, especially during the decisive battle at Bender on June 19-21, when Russian forces intervened and drove the Moldovan forces out. Even though, the conflict between Moldova and its breakaway region did not represent a full-fledged war, “[it] was seized up by the authorities of [Transnistria] as a justification for their independence” (Lynch 2004, p. 55).

One month later, on July 21, 1992 Moldovan government “turned to Russia, [after rejections from CIS and CSCE] and an agreement was signed between presidents Snegur and Yeltsin” (Vahl and Emerson 2004, 159). The agreement recognized the territorial sovereignty of Moldova and a need for a special status for Transnistria. It provided for the establishment of a Joint Control Commission (JCC) and deployment of Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF) - consisting of Moldovan, Transnistrian and Russian delegations and peacekeeping forces - to monitor its implementation. Even though the agreement acknowledged the principle of

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<sup>40</sup>The 14th Soviet army stationed on the left bank of the Dniester River had been integrated into the Russian armed forces, whose General Aleksandr Lebed militarily supported Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov (Vahl and Emerson, 2004)



withdrawal of the Russian troops from Moldova, the 14<sup>th</sup> Army stationed on the left bank stayed and the question of its withdrawal creates hindrances to mutual agreements on conflict resolution (Vahl and Emerson 2004).

Direct official talks between Moldovan and Transnistrian authorities began in 1993; in April 1993 CSCE Mission was set up in Chisinau, whose task was to mediate the official negotiations between the two parties in conflict and to advise on issues of human rights, democratization and refugee return (OSCE 2010)

Already in November 1993, CSCE issued Report No. 13<sup>41</sup>, which outlined the key principles for the status of Transnistria and served as a basis for the diplomatic negotiations. The CSCE in the report ruled out the options of division of Moldova in two separate states, confederation, or a Moldovan unitary state. Instead it proposed Special status for Transnistria with own executive, elective assembly and a court and with a right to territorial 'external self determination', in case Moldova decides to unite with Romania. Also in the light of the controversial language laws passed in 1989, CSCE proposed for Transnistria to have the right to designate official regional languages alongside the 'state language' (Report No. 13).

In February 1994, President Yeltsin resumed the negotiations and signed an agreement with OSCE<sup>42</sup> to start negotiations within the framework of the OSCE proposals. In 1995, Ukraine became the third official co-mediator in the Moldova-Transnistria conflict (Vahl and Emerson 2004). Ten years later, the EU and the US became observers to the negotiations, and the format thus changed to 5+2.

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<sup>41</sup> Full version available at: < [http://www.osce.org/documents/mm/1993/11/454\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/mm/1993/11/454_en.pdf) > Last accessed May 27, 2010

<sup>42</sup> The CSCE became the OSCE in January 1994

### 3.2.1 Track I Proposals

#### *Russian proposal: Common State*

The first concept of the constitution of the Moldovan Republic and the breakaway region of Transnistria was sketched out in 1997. The idea of 'common state' was presented in 1997 by Primakov as a way out of deadlocked negotiations<sup>43</sup>; in 2000 proposals submitted by Moldova and Transnistria built on the concept of 'common state', which hinges upon the principle of “parallel institutions”. Although both parties agreed to its implementation, there were divergent interpretations<sup>44</sup> as to what the concept of 'common state' actually entails and no final agreement on this issue had been reached (Vahl and Emerson 2004).

#### *Russian proposal: Kozak Memorandum*

After the turnover of the governments and a landslide victory of the Communist Party<sup>45</sup> in 2001, the ambiguous idea of the common state had been superseded by draft agreements based on a federal constitution. Both, Kyiv proposal presented by Russia, Ukraine and OSCE in 2002 and the 2003 Kozak memorandum, presented by then-first deputy chief of Russia's Presidential Administration Dmitry Kozak, call for a federal Moldovan republic.

As Vahl and Emerson (2004, p. 171) argue, the Kozak memorandum provided “the most detailed proposal [...] for a constitution of Federal Republic of Moldova”. Kozak conducted

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<sup>43</sup>The principle of Common State also appeared in the 'Memorandum of Understanding on the Bases for the Normalization of Relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria' signed in May 1997 in Moscow by both parties and President Yeltsin.

<sup>44</sup>The idea of 'common state' had been presented at different fora; in May 1998 Ambassador of OSCE, John Evans presented a paper in Chisinau, in which he called for rewriting Wilson's 14 points for the conditions of Former Soviet Union (FSU). In his penultimate principle, he advocates the idea of a common state as a solution to the internal conflict that stifle the countries of FSU, nevertheless, he admits at the same time that “we may have to invent it” (Williams 2004).

<sup>45</sup>Communist leader Vladimir Voronin became the new President of Moldova

shuttle diplomacy between Voronin and Smirnov, who both as it seemed endorsed the plan. According to the Memorandum<sup>46</sup>, Moldova would become an asymmetric federation, with Transnistria having its own constitution, legislature, budget, tax system. Moldova would become a demilitarized, neutral state. The federal Parliament in Chisinau would consist of a Senate<sup>47</sup> and a House of Representatives.

It is important to note that the Senate would have extensive veto powers, since vetoes 'organic laws', whose function would be to regulate the joint competences, could not be overridden. The Senate would also have the constitutional authority to appoint all ministers, so as Vahl and Emerson (2004) and Quinlan (2008) stress that Transnistria would have the power to block the federal government. Voronin, who at first endorsed the plan, refused to sign to the surprise of Putin who was ready to come for the signing ceremony. Voronin justified his action by the lack of agreement among the international community on the issue of the Memorandum (Quinlan 2008). Later, in 2005, Voronin stated that the “Kozak Memorandum on the Transnistrian problem settlement was an error” (Moldova.org 2005).

### ***Ukrainian Proposal***

The proposal of the former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko revived the once again frozen negotiations, nevertheless, not for too long. Yushchenko “unveiled his outline of a seven-step plan to develop democracy, civic society, and guarantee human rights in Transnistria” on April 22, 2005 (Quinlan 2008, 140). Russia and Transnistria endorsed the plan, Moldova, although acquiescing to the general idea made three reservations, which seriously altered the

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<sup>46</sup>Full version available at: <[http://www.pridnestrovie.net/kozak\\_memorandum.html](http://www.pridnestrovie.net/kozak_memorandum.html)> last accessed May 27, 2010

<sup>47</sup>The Senate would have 26 seats and the federal lower house would consist of 9 representatives from Transnistria and 4 from Gagauzia.

plan and led to the rejection by Russia and Transnistria. Moldova conditioned its acceptance of the plan by inclusion of the three resolutions it proposed. The Moldovan government called for democratization before holding democratic elections in Moldova. Second, it demanded the complete withdrawal of Russian troops and armaments by 2005 and the peacekeeping forces by 2006; the Yushchenko plan only vaguely outlined the withdrawal of peacekeeping forces and their replacement by international peacekeeping observers. Thirdly, Moldova insisted on a tighter control of the Transnistrian sector on the Ukraine-Moldova border (Quinlan 2008).

One proposition of the Yushchenko plan survived and materialized. In 2005, the negotiations format changed to 5+2, including EU and US as observers. However, since 2006 the format “remains inoperative [...] blocked by Tiraspol with Moscow's encouragement”, as Russia requests negotiations be conducted in bilateral format (Socor 2010).

Socor (2010) therefore believes that the conflict in Transnistria remains the only really “frozen” conflict, since Russia “unfroze” the conflict in Georgia and more intense negotiations were resumed in Nagorno Karabakh. The negotiations came to an impasse over the issue of a complete withdrawal of Russian troops. Russia steadfastly insists on withdrawal of the troops only after a peaceful settlement is reached and demands Moldova observes its own neutrality. The Moldova’s Acting President Ghimpu<sup>48</sup> on the other hand requests unconditional withdrawal of the Russian troops, and he argues that their presence is incompatible with Moldova’s constitutionally anchored principle of neutrality.

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<sup>48</sup> Mihai Ghimpu became the acting President after the resignation of Vladimir Voronin in September 2009, when despite the victory of the opposition over the communists in the parliamentary elections in July, none of the winning parties was able to secure enough votes to elect a new president. Voronin, who could not run for the third consecutive term, stayed in the office until a new president was appointed.

### **3.3 Role of Track II**

The activities of Track II in the context of Moldovan-Transnistrian conflict have not encompassed such a wide array of activities as is the case of Abkhazia and Georgia. However, Moldovan case is specific in successful interaction and cooperation between the official diplomats and local Track II levels in problem-solving workshops facilitated by MICOM and JCDC. For this reason I will devote most of the subchapter to the workshops and in the second part I will comment on the role of the local NGOs, where I see an important difference between Georgia and Moldova in the nature of the conflicts with their breakaway regions.

#### **3.3.1 Problem-Solving Workshops**

Moldova is a rather unique case, where problem-solving workshops were not only parallel initiative to the official Track I diplomatic efforts but also complemented the work of the official mediators and diplomats and contributed to drafting official documents. The problem-solving workshops are thus regarded as successful cases of a constructive cooperation between Track I and Track II actors.

The Track II work that began in Moldova already in 1992, upon the request from Moldovan representatives, was at first directed at community development. The facilitating work performed by Inter Community Development Services (ICDS) was based on Burton's and Azar's (1986) emphasis on human needs, and thus aimed at addressing underlying problems and needs related to the collapse of the Soviet Union through a self-help approach (Freire 2003, Hall 2004). By October 1992, however, the director of ICDS, Joseph Camplisson and his colleague from Northern Ireland Andrew Williams received official request from the President of Transnistria

Smirnov and from Moldovan President Snegur to conduct problem-solving workshops where influential actors and officials would be able to discuss issues pertaining to conflict resolution in an unofficial setting (Hall 2004, Williams 1999). Camplisson, while meeting with the different levels of political and military leadership personally, realized that even though they all sought resolution to the conflict, they were unable to take any initiative that would move the negotiations towards this goal. As Hall (2004: 5) explains, “[Camplisson] realized that [they] fear[ed] that such [independent] action might not be condoned by those at higher leadership levels”. He perceived the problem-solving workshops that would engage representatives from different levels of leadership from both societies as a way of overcoming this fear. Consequently “Expert Groups” were established by the leadership of Moldova and Transnistria. These “Expert Groups” that would represent both parties to conflict cooperated with the team that formed around Joseph Camplisson and Andrew Williams<sup>49</sup> and participated in the official negotiations mediated by CSCE, which set up its mission to Moldova in 1993 (Hall 2004).

Camplisson and his associates established Moldovan Initiative Committee of Management (MICOM), and began engaging “Expert Groups” in problem-solving workshops in association with Joint Committee for Democratization and Conciliation (JCDC). JCDC drew its membership equally from Moldova and Transnistria. As there was no such organization with joint membership, their emergence and work was of crucial importance<sup>50</sup>.

These workshops brought together equal number of participants from the internal parties in an informal setting, which created a space for discussion of issues and concerns that could not

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<sup>49</sup>The team of Track II facilitators that worked with Joe Camplisson and lead the problem-solving workshops consisted of academics from Center for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, together with the Center for Conflict Analysis (CCA) of the University of Kent Canterbury (Freier 2003)

<sup>50</sup>Besides the workshops they “were facilitating community development initiatives in cities, towns and villages” (Hall 2004, 8).

be discussed at length at the official negotiations. The aim of the workshops was to discover the underlying roots of the conflict, the needs of the parties and the roles of each party within the conflict and suggest options for its resolution (Hall 2004, Freire 2003). As Williams (1999, p. 72) emphasizes the problem-solving workshops had been organized “upon the request of, and with the participation and absolute agreement of, all relevant parties to the conflict”.

At first, the workshops ran parallel to each other engaging participants from the grassroots sector separately from the governmental sector<sup>51</sup>; however, the facilitators soon realized the need to link the non-governmental initiatives with the top leadership, if they wanted to develop more creative workshops that would concentrate also on the constitutional issue (Hall 2004, Fisher 2006). The governmental representatives on the one hand acknowledged the importance of grassroots activities directed at trust-building, on the other they feared that the new leadership that might emerge from the community development activities could challenge their power. To overcome this fear the facilitators encouraged them to see these strands of leadership as complementary to each other (Hall 2004).

MICOM and JCDC succeeded in bringing together members of the NGO sector, representatives of the government from Moldova and Transnistria, and international mediators involved in the OSCE negotiations. The OSCE ambassador, himself, took part in the problem-solving workshops as a “member of the third-party facilitation team” (Fisher 2006: 80).

Series of five joint problem-solving workshops took place in Albena, Bulgaria. The governmental representatives welcomed the openness of NGOs in sharing their views on the issues they see as symptomatic of the *status quo* (Hall 2004). Moreover, in order to facilitate the

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<sup>51</sup> There were three workshops that brought together “advisors to the respective leaders, negotiators in the OSCE talks, parliamentarians and other high-level officials” (Fisher 2006) separately from the NGO sector. These workshops took place at the University of Canterbury (Fisher 2006).

‘reentry’ problem, MICOM and JCDC brought together parliamentarians and local authorities so that once the participants returned from the workshops they would not be ostracized or condemned for meeting with the ‘enemy’ Generally, the workshops helped the participants to develop more productive relationships with different levels of leadership (Hall 2004). Especially successful was the second workshop, when “the Moldovan and Transnistrian co-chairs of the Joint Control Commission [...] developed for the first time a joint recommendation. This was subsequently approved by the full Commission, thereby ending a seven-year curfew” (Hall 2004, 14). By creating joint workshops with the representatives from top level and community level leadership the focus of the workshops became more comparative. This shift of focus and format contributed to a constructive debate also on the constitutional framework. Both parties agreed to a concept of “common state”, which later appeared in 1997 in the joint Memorandum signed in Moscow (Fisher 2006). In 2000, “a larger and more conventional problem-solving conference was held in Kyiv, with both official and unofficial participants and interveners”, which resulted in crafting a constitutional document centered on the concept of the common state. Even though this document has already been superseded by federal proposals, some parts of it appeared also in the Kyiv constitutional document (Fisher 2006).

Williams (1999, p. 85) maintains that the work of the facilitators and the impact of problem-solving workshops have been “acknowledged by the OSCE<sup>52</sup> as extremely useful and complimentary to their work”. Particularly in the early stages of the negotiations, Track II “took over when [Track I] was faltering<sup>53</sup> [...] and was able to provide input into Track I so that more

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<sup>52</sup> OSCE, plays on the one hand, a lead role in the official negotiations and on the other, served, as the “main point of contact for Track I players with Track II initiatives” (Fisher 2006, 79).

<sup>53</sup> In 1995, when the official negotiations arrived at an impasse and the OSCE was not successful in bringing the two parties to the same table, Camplisson and his colleagues organized a study trip to Belfast. Both parties were thus



precise thinking and action could then be taken” (Williams 2005 in Fisher 2006). In Fisher’s (2006) analysis, the Track II work in Moldova is a case in point when coordination between the two forms of third party intervention contributed to their effectiveness and complementarity. And he further opines that “the official track was likely the main beneficiary of the process” (Fisher 2006, p. 81).

### **3. 3. 2 Role of Local NGOs**

The involvement of JCDC in the problem-solving workshops represents a crucial difference between Georgia and Moldova and also points to the character of the conflict. In Georgia, the Track II conflict resolution activities were initiated and sponsored by Western NGOs; there was no joint local project initiated or carried out by the two societies. In Moldova, on the other hand, already from the beginning the participation of a joint Moldovan-Transnistrian NGO in the co-organization of the workshops demonstrates the low level of animosity between the two sides, which made the dialogue possible. Furthermore, the Western NGOs operating in Georgia and Abkhazia while trying to be impartial and acknowledging the causes of both parties to the conflict were sometimes accused of supporting the Abkhaz cause by Georgian leadership and society (Kvarchelia 2010).

In contrast to Georgia, where the coordination within the NGOs working in conflict resolution has become more coordinated, Mikhelidze and Pirozzi (2008) point out that there is very little coordination among civil society organizations in Moldova. And after 2006, when the President of Transnistria „issued a decree prohibiting external financing of local NGOs that are directly ‘engaged in political activities’“(Mikhelidze and Pirozzi 2008, p. 37) the NGOs in

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able to distance themselves from the situation, gain a new perspective how to assess their conflict and resume the official talks (Hall 2004).

Transnistria are closely watched by the secret services, as a consequence there is very limited contact with NGOs from Moldova is taking place. Daria Mandziuk (pers. comm., May 28, 2010) from a prominent Moldovan NGO Contact views the lack of projects for Transnistrian region or in cooperation with Transnistrian NGOs „depressing“. But even despite these hindrances there are some trans-border projects. Daria Mandziuk, for example, conducts an internship program for Transnistrian NGOs, whose members come for two weeks to a Moldovan NGO to establish contacts, exchange ideas and design common activities. She believes that this program on the one hand provides the Transnistrian NGOs with invaluable experience, practical knowledge and new skills and on the other helps tear down the destructive stereotypes about the other.

Another well-established Chisinau-based NGO Promo-LEX runs projects aimed at democracy and civil society building in Transnistria. For example, in 2006-2007 they implemented a project Resource and Development Center for Transnistria aimed at helping with registering and management of NGOs, monitoring human rights, and monitoring the situation in the breakaway region (Promo-LEX 2010).

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to identify why despite the involvement of official mediators and unofficial facilitators and International NGOs the conflict in Georgia escalated into violence, whereas the frozen conflict in Moldova has been managed rather peacefully. The contribution of the thesis to the existing literature on conflict resolution and transformation lies in the critical analysis of the initiatives carried out by Track II actors in both countries alongside the analysis of the dynamics of the conflicts and the reasons for rejection of official settlement proposals presented by the third parties or parties to the conflict.

The hypothesis that closer cooperation between Track I and Track II actors would contribute to a resolution of a conflict, as it is argued in the conflict resolution literature, was after close examination of the empirical data not proven. Moreover, the aim of the problem-solving workshops and dialogue series to overcome the animosity and diffuse hostile perceptions of the other has proven illusory. The domestic and international political factors played a greater role in the manner the negotiations have been carried out and progressed, and the extent different actors cooperated with each other, which is however, not tackled by the conflict resolution literature itself and the literature pertaining to the particular contexts, specifically.

The two cases are illustrative of this observation. The facilitators leading the Schlaining process dialogues have not been able to avoid politicization of the seminars, which in the end served as communication channels, particularly for Abkhazia, with the other side and the international community. Both sides, despite of the fact that the dialogues had been going on for more than a decade have not been able to overcome their perceptions and stereotypes about the other party. And even if the perceptions of the participants altered, this happened only on a

personal level and has not affected their professional stance. Moreover, divergent opinions from that of the government, especially in case of Abkhazia, might have seriously undermined the claims of a unified call for independence of the Abkhaz people.

Looking at the surface, it might seem that the problem- workshops carried out by MICOM and JCDC in Moldova, contributed to overcoming barriers and hindrances towards successful negotiations and thus they might have been the determining factor for peaceful management of the conflict.

However, the proclaimed successes of these venues, as is the case of Moldova, have been studied in the literature separate from closer examination of the international and domestic political realities. As the thesis demonstrated, the problem-solving workshops even if they served as an alternative venue, have not refrained from being just another venue for the same political communication as at the official level.

Furthermore, it has to be reminded that in Georgia, the dialogue process has been going on continuously since 1995 and Oliver Wolleh started another round of the Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue after the 2008 war. In Moldova, the problem-solving workshops facilitated by MICOM and JCDC ended in 2001, and for nine more consecutive years the conflict has not escalated into violence; moreover they had not led to a resolution of the conflict nor a mutually acceptable settlement, even though they complemented the negotiations carried out by the official mediators.

In assessing the successes or failures of these workshops, the political realities, political positions and international strategic importance of the particular states stifled by conflicts and the role of the outside actors should not be overlooked. The analysis of the official proposals and reactions of the third parties is instructive in this respect. As it was stated in the introduction,

Moldova and Georgia had seemingly similar starting positions, since both had to face territorial claims of their former constituent units, which escalated into internal war resulting in the victory of the breakaway regions and their *de facto* independence. However, the two cases differ in several aspects, which should be taken into account when assessing the failures and successes of the Track II work.

First, on the domestic level, Saakashvili led a more pro-active and aggressive politics aiming at reintegration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, promising to the Georgian people that he would bring those territories back under the full jurisdiction of Georgia until the end of his term. In Moldova, there has not been such rhetoric from President Voronin, moreover, the interaction between the two regions is lively, especially when it comes to business and more importantly there is little separation between the people. In Georgia, on the other hand, the bilateral relations were especially strained by the issue of return of the internally displaced persons to Abkhazia; Moldova does not have such a severe problem with refugees, since the conflict itself did not have such a strong ethnic component and was not as intense and violent as in Georgia.

Second, on the international level, the crucial distinction is the strategic importance of Georgia, as it directly borders Russia. From this stems also the problematic issue of the US involvement and the talk of NATO expansion and Saakashvili's almost exclusive pro-Western, pro-American leaning. Moldova, on the other hand, is there is no

These distinctions also resurfaced in the problem-solving workshops and dialogue series. This is not to downplay the importance of such initiatives as alternative forums for communication, however, their impact and capacity to succeed in diffusing the hostile sentiments should not be overestimated. The Track II practitioners, however, have to realize the importance of domestic and international political factors when designing their strategies for particular

countries. It also has to be noted that their involvement can be a double-edged sword. The international organizations have to take into account the fact that their proclaimed objectivity might be by some regarded as a support of the other party. Moreover, they have to be aware of the domestic situation and the position of the government when engaging the civil society in the workshops, as this intention might sometimes backfire and lead to the clampdown of the civil society by the government.

For these results to be generally applicable, however, further research including wider array of cases representing varied level of intensity of conflicts has to be carried out. However, I believe that the thesis pointed to important issues that should be tackled by the conflict resolution theory.

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