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A Differentiated, Balanced and Patient Approach to Conflict Resolution? The EU's Involvement with Georgia's Secessionist Conflicts beyond the August 2008 War

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About the Author

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Abstract

The August war in 2008 between Russia and Georgia caught the world by surprise but nevertheless brought the European Union (EU) to the forefront of the international efforts to end the hostilities, and the EU became the leading international actor involved with the conflict resolution process. However, in the years following the armed conflict, the conflict resolution process lost pace, and the impact of the EU beyond the immediate aftermath of the August 2008 war has been put into question. By undertaking a qualitative case study, this paper aims to explore to what extent the EU has impacted on the conflict resolution process of Georgia's secessionist conflicts in 2008-2015. It will argue that the EU's policies have only to a limited extent impacted on this conflict resolution process, which can be related to the objectives, priorities and time perspectives of the EU's conflict resolution policies. The EU's efforts have significantly contributed to the objective of conflict prevention, but the profile of the EU in the field of international conflict management weakened its position in the area of conflict transformation, where the lack of progress in turn limited the EU's impact in the areas of international conflict management and conflict settlement. The main conclusion put forward is that in order to have a true impact, the EU needs to undertake a differentiated, balanced and patient approach to conflict resolution.

Introduction

On 8 August 2008, the world was taken by surprise when Russian troops for the first time since 1979 crossed national borders to attack sovereign state,[1] which resulted in the greatest crisis for European security in over a decade.[2] The five-day war between Russia and Georgia caused the death of hundreds of soldiers and civilians, thousands wounded, the displacement of over 100 000 of people,[3] and the *de facto* loss of the Georgian breakaway regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[4] The European Union (EU) and the rest of the international community by large failed to prevent the outbreak of hostilities in August 2008,[5] but the war nevertheless brought the EU to the forefront of the international efforts to end the armed Georgian-Russian conflict. The EU played an instrumental role in ending the hostilities by mediating the six-point ceasefire agreement and by launching the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) Georgia.[6] The secessionist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia was brought to the top of the EU's agenda, and the EU became the leading international actor involved with the conflict resolution process in Georgia.[7] A new EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the crisis in Georgia was appointed to mediate between the conflict parties in the Geneva International Discussions (GID), and the European Commission became one of the largest donors of humanitarian assistance and funding for peacebuilding projects in Abkhazia.[8]

The role of the EU in the aftermath of the August 2008 war has been celebrated as a major diplomatic success[9] and has attracted significant attention by both policy makers and academic scholars in the fields of international and European security, conflict resolution and secessionist conflicts. However, in the years following the outbreak of hostilities when the security situation was relatively stabilised, the conflict

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[1] S.E. Cornell & F. Starr, "Introduction", in S.E. Cornell & F. Starr (eds.), *The Guns of August 2008 – Russia's War in Georgia*, Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, 2009, p. 3.
[2] R.D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 4.
[3] Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG), *Report Volume I*, September 2009, p. 5.
[4] J. Boonstra & L. Delcour, "A broken region: evaluating EU policies in the South Caucasus", *FRIDE Policy Briefs*, no. 193, January 2015, p. 2.
[5] Asmus, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
[6] N. Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts*, London, Routledge, 2011, p. 86-92.
[7] M. Merlingen & R. Ostrauskaite, "EU Peacebuilding in Georgia: Limits and Achievements", in S. Blockmans, J. Wouters & T. Ruys (eds.), *The European Union and Peacebuidling,* The Hague, T.M.C. Asser Press, 2010, p. 270.
[8] European Union Delegation to Georgia, *EU Assistance to People Affected by Conflict in Georgia – Overview*, Tbilisi, October 2011, pp. 4-5.
[9] Merlingen & Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

resolution process lost pace,[10] and the interest for the secessionist conflicts among academics and policy makers has gradually decreased since then. The EU's impact on the conflict resolution process in Georgia in the longer term has been put into question,[11] but more recent literature on the topic seems to be missing by large. Further on, existing research appears to be mainly empirical and falls short of providing a theoretical framework in which the EU's involvement with conflict resolution in Georgia can be sufficiently understood.[12] Yet, the Ukraine crisis and the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 have shed new light on the status of the protracted and secessionist conflicts in the EU's eastern neighbourhood. The strategic partnership and alliance treaties signed between Russia and Abkhazia in 2014[13] and between Russia and South Ossetia in 2015[14] further on call for new attentiveness to the EU's involvement and impact on the conflict resolution process of Georgia's secessionist conflicts.

This paper aims to explore to what extent the EU has impacted on the conflict resolution process of Georgia's secessionist conflicts in 2008-2015, and whether this can be related to the objectives, priorities and time perspectives of the EU's conflict resolution policies. A qualitative case study of the EU's conflict resolution policies will be conducted building on Bruno Coppieters' differentiated approach to conflict resolution.[15] The ambition is to make an empirical contribution filling into the current research gap, as well as to provide a potential theoretical framework in which the EU's involvement with conflict resolution in Georgia could be understood. The application of Coppieters' differentiated approach may also serve to test its validity as an analytical framework to assess the impact of the EU's conflict resolution policies beyond the August 2008 war. Hopefully, the findings of this paper will also prove valuable to inform the EU's future conflict resolution policies in Georgia, and potentially as well in other conflict resolution contexts where the EU is active or about to be engaged.

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[10] R.G. Whitman & S. Wolff, "The EU as a conflict manager? The Case of Georgia and its implications", *International Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 1, 2010, p. 93.
[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 89-94.
[12] N. Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 14, no. 4, November 2009, p. 459.
[13] "Moscow, Sokhumi Sign Treaty on Alliance and Strategic Partnership", *Civil.ge*, 24 November 2014.
[14] "Pact Brings South Ossetia Closer to Russia", *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 March 2015.
[15] B. Coppieters, "The EU and Georgia: time perspectives in conflict resolution", *European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) Occasional Paper*, no. 70, December 2007, pp. 1-29.

The paper will show that the EU has only to a limited extent impacted on the conflict resolution process of Georgia's secessionist conflicts from 2008 until today, which can be related to the objectives, priorities and time perspectives of the EU's conflict resolution policies. The EU's efforts have to a great degree contributed to the achievement of the objective of conflict prevention. However, the profile of the EU in the field of international conflict management weakened its position in the area of conflict transformation, where the lack of progress in turn limited the EU's impact in the areas of international conflict management and conflict settlement. These results demonstrate the interrelatedness of different objectives of conflict resolution as well as the need for the EU to undertake a differentiated, balanced and patient approach to conflict resolution in order to be able to achieve positive results in the shorter and longer term.

The paper will commence with a presentation of the theoretical framework and methodology applied in this work, followed by a shorter overview of the secessionist conflicts and the EU's conflict resolution policies between 2008 and 2015. A qualitative case study and analysis of the EU's involvement with Georgia's secessionist conflicts will then follow and the paper will end with a conclusion and discussion of the main findings.

A differentiated approach to conflict resolution

When examining the EU's engagement with conflict resolution in Georgia from the beginning of the 1990s until 2007, Bruno Coppieters proposes an analysis of the broader framework of conflict resolution policies through a differentiation of four distinctive objectives: conflict prevention, conflict transformation, international conflict management and conflict settlement, each with specific tasks to achieve.[16] The realisation of these policy objectives corresponds to a particular timeframe, but this does not imply that they should be achieved in sequence but rather that they are best pursued in parallel and closely linked to each other, according to their respective time perspectives. Steps taken within one of the policy objectives will have an immediate effect on the others where the emphasis of one objective may happen at the expense of others, hence worsening the overall prospects for conflict resolution. Any kind of linkage that overlooks the diversity of policy types and

[16] *Ibid.*

distinctive time spans required for each of them to yield positive results may negatively impact on the broader process of conflict resolution. Coppieters therefore argues that a differentiated, balanced and patient approach to the various policy objectives in conflict resolution should in principle allow for positive results to be achieved in both the shorter and the longer term.[17] Consequently, the objectives, priorities and time perspectives of the EU's conflict resolution policies in Georgia could serve as useful analytical distinctions to describe and assess their potential impact.

Conflict prevention

Conflict prevention is the first objective of conflict resolution, and it maintains that "the incompatibility of positions should not escalate to open violence", the aim for the parties being the resolution of the conflict by peaceful means.[18] This objective is closely linked to developments in the other fields of conflict resolution, where a lack of progress might cause frustration that could lead to confrontation and the escalation of open violence. Conflict prevention is also a prominent subject in discussions on conflict settlement, where a political mechanism in the security domain is needed in order to "de-escalate post-settlement conflicts".[19] There are consequently two timeframes for conflict prevention policies: one aiming to prevent any escalation of open violence in the present, and another creating a functional framework capable of providing security in the longer term.[20]

Conflict transformation

The second objective is conflict transformation where "the parties' positions have to be made more compatible".[21] Policies of conflict transformation aim at changing the degree of incompatibility between the parties' positions, where the identities and interests of the various parties and communities are brought closer together. Informal diplomacy is also undertaken with the aim to create equal opportunities for members of the different conflict communities to discuss new prospects for conflict resolution. Conflict transformation policies require continuous and finely balanced efforts with a long-time perspective to achieve positive results, and they should be supported regardless of setbacks in other areas of conflict resolution. Due to the

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-28.
[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 14.
[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 14.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

timeframe required, policies of conflict transformation cannot be suspended or made contingent on progress or failures in other fields, but should nevertheless not be detached from the work done within other areas of conflict resolution.[22]

International conflict management

International conflict management is the third objective with the aim to "contain the escalation of conflicts and create incentives for a settlement, by exercising leverage on the parties or by changing the balance of power between them".[23] Policies of international conflict management typically aim to de-escalate tensions between the parties by offering mediation for the handling of disputes. An international actor may also need to support the position of one of the parties in order to create incentives for an agreement. However, in order for such a policy to contribute to the overall process of conflict resolution, it also needs to be in accordance with a policy of conflict transformation and not cause the parties to drift further apart from each other. In other words, an increased EU profile in conflict management could weaken its position in conflict transformation and it is therefore of importance to avoid a clash or imbalance between these two policy objectives.[24]

Conflict settlement

The fourth and final objective is conflict settlement where "the parties should reach agreement on a common institutional framework".[25] In this context, joint decision-making will demonstrate that the identities and interests of the parties have been made compatible. The aim of conflict settlement policies in the context of Georgia's secessionist conflicts is to facilitate and support negotiations on the international status of the two breakaway regions. One of the main obstacles to overcome in negotiations is the incompatibility of positions of the conflict parties, whose rapprochement is the objective of conflict transformation, once again highlighting the importance of closely linking the different policy objectives. Conflict settlement policies are also important in the context of conflict prevention, as a lack of progress on the question of status could generate violent confrontation and escalation. However, efforts within the other objectives should not be made contingent on the progress or failure of conflict settlement and patience is needed if progress in the

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6, 18, 27.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 21-22.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

other fields is to generate more favourable conditions to successfully reach a conflict settlement.[26]

A qualitative case study

In assessing the potential impact of the EU on the conflict resolution processes in Georgia in 2008-2015, a case study of four different EU conflict resolution policies will be undertaken: the EUMM, the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), and the Instrument for Stability (IfS). For the purpose of this paper, the concept of "impact" is understood to mean the contribution to the progress of the conflict resolution processes in Georgia within the fixed time frame. A "conflict resolution process" is further on perceived as the parallel policies and activities being undertaken within the four distinctive policy objectives of conflict prevention, conflict transformation, international conflict management and conflict settlement. In the context of this research, the two secessionist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia will moreover be approached as one single conflict resolution process.

In order to assess the impact of the EU on the conflict resolution process of Georgia's secessionist conflicts, a tool of analysis building on Coppieters' differentiated approach to conflict resolution will be applied. This tool will be used to examine to what degree the EU's conflict resolution policies have been able to contribute to the achievement of each of the four policy objectives of conflict prevention, conflict transformation, international conflict management and conflict settlement. To this end, the cumulative contributions of the EUMM, the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, the ENPI and the IfS, will be assigned a value for each of the policy objectives on a scale including "*to a great degree*", "*to some degree*", and "*to a poor degree*".

Conflict prevention

The objective of conflict prevention is defined as "the incompatibility of positions should not escalate to open violence".[27] In the context of this paper, conflict prevention policies are consequently understood as those aiming to prevent the incompatibility of positions between the parties from escalating to open violence,

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6, 23-25, 29.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

both in present time and in the longer term. "Open violence" is further on understood as a security situation resembling that of the August war in 2008. To attain the value "*to a great degree*", the accumulated contributions of the EU's conflict resolution policies need to have prevented the escalation of open violence, and to have contributed to discussions on the establishment of a post-settlement security mechanism. For the value "*to some degree*", the accumulated contributions need have partly prevented the escalation of open violence, and to some extent have contributed to discussions on the establishment of a security mechanism in the longer term. Finally, to attain the value "*to a poor degree"*, the accumulated contributions should have failed to prevent the escalation of open violence, and to not have contributed to the establishment of any kind of security mechanism in the longer term.

Conflict transformation

For the objective of conflict transformation to be achieved, "the parties' positions have to be made more compatible".[28] In this paper, conflict transformation policies will be understood as those aiming at changing the degree of incompatibility between the parties' positions whereby the identities and interests of the conflicting parties are brought closer together. To attain the value "*to a great degree*", the accumulated contributions of the EU's conflict resolution policies need to have changed the degree of incompatibility between the parties' positions, whereby the identities and interests of the conflicting parties have been brought closer together. For the value "*to some degree*", the accumulated contributions need to have partly changed the degree of incompatibility between the parties' positions, whereby the identities and interests of the conflicting parties to some extent have been brought closer together. Lastly, to attain the value "*to a poor degree"*, the accumulated contributions should have failed to change the degree of incompatibility between the parties' positions whereby the identities and interests of the conflicting parties have not been brought closer together.

International conflict management

For the objective of international conflict management to be realised, external actors need to "contain the escalation of conflicts and create incentives for a settlement, by exercising leverage on the parties or by changing the balance of

[28] *Ibid.*

power between them".[29] In the context of this paper, policies of international conflict management will be understood as those aiming to de-escalate tensions between the parties by mediation efforts, the support of one of the parties' positions, the exercise of leverage on all or some of the parties or the change of balance of power between them in order to create incentives for a settlement. To attain the value "*to a great degree*", the accumulated contributions of the EU's conflict resolution policies need to have contained the escalation of conflicts between the parties through mediation efforts and to have created incentives for a settlement. For the value "*to some degree*", the accumulated contributions need to have partly contained the escalation of conflicts between the parties through mediation efforts and to some extent have created incentives for a settlement. Finally, to attain the value "*to a poor degree"*, the accumulated contributions should have failed to contain the escalation of conflicts between the parties as well as to not have created incentives for a settlement.

Conflict settlement

For the objective of conflict settlement to be achieved, "the parties should reach agreement on a common institutional framework".[30] This paper understands conflict settlement policies as those aiming to facilitate and support negotiations on the international status of the two breakaway regions, ultimately leading to an agreement on a common institutional framework. To attain the value "*to a great degree*", the accumulated contributions of the EU's conflict resolution policies need to have facilitated and supported negotiations on the international status of the breakaway regions, where an agreement on a common institutional framework should have been reached by the parties. For the value "*to some degree*", the accumulated contributions need to have somehow supported negotiations on the international status of the breakaway regions, however without having led to an agreement by the parties on a common institutional framework. Lastly, to attain the value "*to a poor degree"*, the accumulated contributions should have failed to support negotiations on the international status of the breakaway regions, where no agreement on a common institutional framework should have been reached by the parties.

[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

As the theoretical framework and methodology applied in this work have now been presented, the paper will below proceed with a shorter overview of the secessionist conflicts and the EU's conflict resolution policies between 2008 and 2015.

The secessionist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Georgia's secessionist conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia have their origins in Soviet history with different interpretations of what the conflicts are about as well as who constitutes a party.[31] The diverging views of the parties involved in the conflicts, that is, Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia, complicate an impartial historical background to the secessionist conflicts. This holds especially regarding the details of the start of the August 2008 war where all parties have been found to commit actions in violation of international law.[32] The violent conflict that erupted between 8-12 August could be described as a combined inter-state and intra-state conflict, with opposing Georgian and Russian forces at one level, and South Ossetian and Abkhaz fighters opposing Georgian forces at the other level.[33] When the ceasefire agreement was signed between Moscow and Tbilisi on 12 August, the war had resulted in 850 casualties, thousands wounded, the displacement of more than 100 000 people[34] and severe damages to infrastructure and civilian property.[35] The six-point Agreement committed the parties to not resort to force, to provide free access for humanitarian aid, and the withdrawal of troops from both sides to their positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities. The agreement also foresaw the opening of international talks on security and stability arrangements in the breakaway regions.[36]

On 26 August 2008, Russia recognised the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as sovereign states, which provoked strong verbal reactions from Tbilisi[37] and the West.[38] In October 2008, the Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories entered into force, establishing a special legal regime over the breakaway regions, restricting

[31] Frichova Grono, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
[32] IIFFMCG, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 22-26.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[35] Frichova Grono, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
[36] Council of the European Union, *Press Release – Extraordinary meeting General Affairs and External Relations*, 12453/08 (Presse 236), Brussels, 13 August 2008, pp. 6-7.
[37] "Russia Backs Independence of Georgian Enclaves", *The New York Times*, 26 August 2008.
[38] S. E. Cornell, J. Popjanevski & N. Nilsson, "Russia's War in Georgia: Causes and Implications for Georgia and the World", *Policy Paper Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program*, August 2008, p. 22.

migration and economic activities.[39] Moscow has since August 2008 maintained significant political, economic and military support to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[40] In November 2014, Russia and Abkhazia signed a "Treaty on Alliance and Strategic Partnership"[41] forming a joint Russian and Abkhazian force and doubling Russia's subsidies to Abkhazia for 2015, provoking strong reactions from Tbilisi, Brussels and Washington.[42] Russia also signed a "Treaty on Alliance and Integration" with South Ossetia in March 2015, laying out a framework for the integration of Russian and South Ossetian security forces, military and customs services and the joint protection of borders. The treaty has been condemned by the EU, the United States and Georgia, stating that it was in clear violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.[43]

The EU's conflict resolution policies in Georgia in 2008-2015

Prior to a rather limited engagement with Georgia's secessionist conflicts since the beginning of the 1990s, the EU was at the forefront of the international efforts to stop the five-day war in August 2008. The then head of the EU Presidency, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, engaged in a series of diplomatic negotiations between the parties that resulted in the signature of the six-point Agreement.[44] The EU as well played an instrumental role in the signing of the Agreement on Implementation Measures between Georgia and Russia on 8 September,[45] where points were added on the withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces, international monitoring and consultation mechanisms.[46] The EU's position has since been to support Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. In its approach to the breakaway regions, it deploys a strategy of engagement without recognition, where it seeks to engage with the entities in support of long-term conflict resolution at the same time as remaining adherent to Georgia's territorial integrity.[47] Below follows a shorter presentation of the EU's four main conflict resolution policies in Georgia,

[39] M. Saakashvili, The President of Georgia, *The Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories*, Tbilisi, 23 October 2008.
[40] Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts, op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.
[41] "Moscow, Sokhumi Sign Treaty on Alliance and Strategic Partnership", *op. cit.*
[42] "West Rejects Treaty Between Russia, Abkhazia", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 25 November 2014.
[43] "Pact Brings South Ossetia Closer to Russia", *op. cit.*
[44] Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts, op. cit.*, p. 86.
[45] Whitman & Wolff, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
[46] International Alert, *International Engagement in the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict Resolution Process*, May 2010, p. 36.
[47] "EU-Georgia relations", *European External Action Service (EEAS).*

namely the EUMM, the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, the ENPI and the IfS.

The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia

On 1 October 2008, the EU launched an unarmed civilian monitoring mission to Georgia, the EUMM Georgia. The mission is set out to monitor the actions of the conflict parties and their full compliance with the six-point Agreement, to contribute to stabilisation, normalisation, confidence building and to inform EU policy for a political solution to the conflict. The short-term objective of the EUMM is to stabilise the situation and to reduce the risk of a resumption of hostilities, as well as to contribute to the long-term stability in Georgia and the surrounding region.[48] The mission deploys around 200 monitors patrolling the buffer zones around the conflict zones, in particular the areas adjacent to the Administrative Border Lines (ABLs) of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The mandate covers the territory of Georgia's internationally recognised borders, however the mission has so far been denied access by the *de facto* authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to the territories under their control.[49]

The EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia

On 25 September 2008, Pierre Morel was appointed as the first EUSR for the crisis in Georgia[50] with a mandate to prepare for and represent the EU's position in the GID, as well as to facilitate the overall implementation of the six-point Agreement and the Agreement on Implementation Measures.[51] The previous position and mandate of the EUSR for the South Caucasus, established in 2003, was kept until September 2011 when the two mandates were merged into one, the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia.[52] The broad mandate now includes contributing to a peaceful settlement of the conflicts in the South Caucasus, including Georgia's conflicts and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as to encourage regional cooperation. Additionally, the EUSR is mandated to co-chair and represent the EU in

[48] Council of the European Union, "Council Joint Action (2008/736/CFSP) of 15 September 2008 on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, EUMM Georgia", *Official Journal of the European Union*, L248, 17 September 2008, pp. 26-27.
[49] "EUMM – European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia", *EUMM*.
[50] Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts, op. cit.*, p. 89.
[51] Council of the European Union, "Council Joint Action (2008/760/CFSP) of 25 September 2008 appointing the European Union Special Representative for the crisis in Georgia", *Official Journal of the European Union*, L259, 27 September 2008, p. 16.
[52] European External Action Service, *European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia*, Brussels, 2 February 2015, p. 1.

the GID and to facilitate the implementation of the ceasefire agreements.[53] In the context of this paper, the term EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia will synonymously be used for both of the mandates prior to 2011, as well as the mandate after the merger in 2011.

The GID was launched in October 2008[54] following the six-point Agreement, calling for the "opening of international talks on the security and stability arrangements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia".[55] The talks bring together representatives of Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and are co-chaired by the EU through the EUSR, the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The GID mandate extends to the whole territory of Georgia[56] and the talks aim in particular to cover security and stability arrangements in the region, the situation concerning Internationally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, as well as any other subject brought up by mutual agreement between the parties.[57]

The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and the Instrument for Stability

The main financial instruments through which the EU channels funding for conflict resolution in Georgia are the ENPI and the IfS, which provide aid in the form of contracts and grants to international and local organisations and non-governmental organisations.[58] Since the 2008 war, EU-funded programmes in South Ossetia remain highly limited due to restrictions imposed by the *de facto* South Ossetian authorities, but in Abkhazia the EU is one of the largest international donors.[59]

For the period of 2007-2010, €19 million of grant assistance was allocated to support for a peaceful settlement of the conflicts in the breakaway regions through the ENPI, devoted to rehabilitation and reconstruction projects, confidence building and

[53] Council of the European Union, "Council Decision (2011/518/CFSP) of 25 August 2011 appointing the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia", *Official Journal of the European Union*, L221, 27 August 2011, pp. 5-6.
[54] Merlingen & Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, p. 289.
[55] Council of the European Union, *Press Release – Extraordinary meeting*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
[56] Merlingen & Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-290.
[57] Council of the European Union, "Council Joint Action (2008/760/CFSP)", *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[58] "Overview", *Delegation of the European Union to Georgia*.
[59] European Union Delegation to Georgia, *EU Assistance to People Affected by Conflict in Georgia, op. cit.,* pp. 4-5.

measures to improve the living conditions for affected populations and IDPs.[60] In the aftermath of the 2008 war, an addition of €66 million was allocated to the ENPI.[61] Between 2011 and 2013, the corresponding grant assistance for conflict resolution amounted to €9-18 million.[62] For the period of 2014-2020, the ENPI was replaced by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI),[63] however without any budget line specifically devoted to conflict resolution in Georgia.[64] In the context of this paper, the term ENPI will be synonymously used for both the ENPI and the ENI between 2008 and 2015.

Following the August war, the EU in 2008-2009 allocated €32 million through the IfS for projects to facilitate the return and reintegration of IDPs,[65] an amount that was increased in 2010-2011 by €58 million.[66] In 2010 the Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM) was established under the IfS, financing small-scale projects between communities in Georgia and Abkhazia,[67] with the main objective of fostering a peaceful transformation of the conflicts and promoting people-to-people contacts.[68] In 2012 and 2013, the IfS assistance significantly decreased to €16 and €8,5 million respectively, which was devoted to projects supporting confidence-building measures in the breakaway regions and capacity building to the State Ministry for Reintegration.[69] For the period of 2014-2020, the IfS was succeeded by the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP).[70] In the context of this research, the term IfS will be synonymously used for both the IfS and the IcSP in 2008-2015.

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[60] European Commission, *European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Georgia – National Indicative Programme 2007-2010*, pp. 4, 14-15.
[61] Whitman & Wolff, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[62] European Commission, *"European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Georgia – National Indicative Programme 2011-2013"*, p. 10.
[63] "How is the ENP financed?", *EEAS*.
[64] European Commission, *Programming of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) – 2014-2020*, p. 5.
[65] "Instrument for Stability (IfS)", *Delegation of the European Union to Georgia*.
[66] European Commission, *2010 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability PART 1*, Brussels, 16 August 2011, p. 37 & European Commission, *2011 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability Volume 1*, Brussels, 24 July 2012, p. 38.
[67] European Commission, *2010 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability*, Brussels, 16 August 2011, p. 6.
[68] European Union Delegation to Georgia, *EU Assistance to People Affected by Conflict in Georgia, op. cit.,* p. 20.
[69] European Commission, *2012 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability Volume 1*, Brussels, 27 July 2013, pp. 40-42, & European Commission, *2013 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability PART 2/3*, Brussels, 2 December 2014, pp. 16-18.
[70] "Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, preventing conflict around the world", *European Commission*, 20 March 2015.

A differentiated, balanced and patient approach to conflict resolution?

The following qualitative case study examines to what degree the accumulated contributions of the EUMM, the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, the ENPI and the IfS have contributed to the achievement of each of the policy objectives of conflict prevention, conflict transformation, international conflict management and conflict settlement.

Conflict prevention

In the months following the war in August 2008, the security situation remained tense and fragile in the areas around the conflict zones with fatal shootings, attacks and car bombs,[71] and concerns for a resumption of hostilities were widespread.[72] In October 2008, the EUMM confirmed the withdrawal of Russian troops from territories adjacent to the breakaway regions. However, a substantial number of Russian troops were to remain in the breakaway regions,[73] and the Russian military continues also in 2015 to violate the fifth point of the six-point Agreement.[74] In June 2009 the security situation deteriorated,[75] and in the upcoming months a considerable number of violent incidents erupted with the potential of igniting a wider confrontation between the conflict parties.[76] Nevertheless, the security situation has thereafter somewhat stabilised and the situation along the ABLs has been reported to be relatively calm,[77] without any major incidents or resumption of hostilities.[78]

Both academics and policy makers have pointed to the indispensible role the EUMM has played in deterring and preventing any further escalation of hostilities by facilitating the separation of the conflict parties and monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire.[79] By investigating shooting incidents and kidnappings in the conflict areas as well as by establishing contacts with all the conflict parties, the EUMM is

[71] "CrisisWatch Database", *International Crisis Group*, 1 October 2008 - 1 February 2009.
[72] "EUMM – European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia", *op. cit*.
[73] "CrisisWatch Database", *op. cit.*, 1 November 2008.
[74] "EUMM – European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia", *op. cit*.
[75] "CrisisWatch Database", *op. cit.*, 1 July 2009.
[76] IIFFMCG, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[77] International Alert, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[78] Interview with an EU official, EUMM, via e-mail, 21 March 2015.
[79] Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts, op. cit.*, p. 90 & interview with an EU official, Office of the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, EEAS, Brussels, 12 March 2015 & interview with a Georgian official, Mission of Georgia to the European Union, Brussels, 18 March 2015 & interview with Sergi Kapanadze, Former Deputy Foreign Minister and Chief Negotiator of Georgia in the GID, via Skype, 25 March 2015.

claimed to "doubtlessly" have contributed to contain and prevent the outbreak of violence.[80] However, the denied access to the breakaway regions prevents the EUMM from monitoring the situation on the other side of the ABLs[81] and hampers it from receiving comprehensive and impartial information about the situation on the ground.[82] The preventive role of the GID has also been highlighted, as the representatives of the conflict parties in this venue might be held responsible for incidents on the ground, a scenario they rather wish to avoid.[83]

In the framework of the GID, discussions have been undertaken about the need for solid security guarantees in the region.[84] Since September 2009, the parties have been working on a deal on the non-use of force but continuously disagree on the issue of international security arrangements.[85] In principle, all parties agree to work on legally binding documents, but the opinions significantly differ regarding the form of the agreement, who should sign it, who should oversee its implementation as well as what international norms and underlying agreements it should encompass. The EUSR has together with the other co-chairs argued that such an agreement must be part of a general security agreement that provides for the separation of forces, dialogue between the parties as well as monitoring and control mechanisms to oversee the parties' compliance.[86] Russia and the breakaway regions have insisted that agreements on the non-use of force are signed between Georgia and Abkhazia and between Georgia and South Ossetia. However, Georgia has claimed that such an agreement can only be signed between Georgia and Russia and that it should envisage a de-occupation of the breakaway regions.[87] As Russia continuously insists that it does not constitute a party to the conflict, it has refused to sign an agreement,[88] and the GID has to date failed to deliver any concrete results to this end.[89]

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[80] Merlingen & Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, pp. 286-288.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 288.
[82] Interview with Bruno Coppieters, Professor in Political Science, Free University of Brussels, Brussels, 9 March 2015.
[83] Interview with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*
[84] International Alert, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[85] "CrisisWatch Database", *op. cit.*, 1 October 2009.
[86] International Alert, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
[87] "Sixth Round of Geneva Talks 'Sometimes Difficult' but 'Constructive'", *Civil.ge*, 2 July 2009.
[88] "CrisisWatch Database", *op. cit.*, 3 January 2011.
[89] "Press Communiqué of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions", *OSCE*, 1 July 2015.

Even though the denied access to the breakaway regions prevents the EUMM from fully implementing its mandate, the mission is still widely considered to have significantly stabilised the situation and prevented an escalation of hostilities and open violence. In addition, the EUSR has actively promoted and contributed to discussions in the GID on agreements on the non-use of force and international security arrangements, even though they have yet failed to deliver any concrete results in this regard. When taking the above into account, the EU's conflict resolution policies are considered to have contributed to the achievement of the policy objective of conflict prevention *to a great degree*.

Conflict transformation

Some scholars have highlighted the EUMM's role in seeking to establish conditions on the ground that are conducive to the undertaking of confidence-building efforts between the conflict parties. After Russian troops had withdrawn from the areas adjacent to the breakaway regions in October 2008, the EUMM started to increasingly focus on contributing to building confidence between the parties across the ABLs. However, the EUMM has not been able to do more than monitoring and reporting on developments on the ground as well as establishing communication channels between the actors, falling short of reinvigorating the peace process and rebuilding confidence between the actors along the ABLs.[90] "Significant work" still remains to be done by the EUMM in terms of confidence building,[91] where the access to the breakaway regions is an essential element for progress towards this end.[92]

Even though the EU has enabled the parties to meet and come together through the GID,[93] the track record of the GID has been limited in terms of bringing the parties' positions and interests closer together,[94] and there is currently no strong force for progress towards this end.[95] No tangible outcome has so far been reached as

[90] Merlingen & Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-288.
[91] "EUMM – European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia", *op. cit*., & interview with a Georgian official, *op. cit.*
[92] "EUMM – European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia", *op. cit*., & interview with Bruno Coppieters, *op. cit.*
[93] Interview with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*
[94] Interview with Thomas de Waal, Senior Associate Russia and Eurasia, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Brussels, 18 March 2015.
[95] Interview with Bruno Coppieters, *op. cit.*

regards agreements on the non-use of force or international security arrangements,[96] and the parties' positions remain incompatible.[97] Given how entrenched the parties' positions are, there is not much leeway for the EU or any other external actor to bring the positions of the parties closer together.[98] Despite the limited results, the parties still to some extent recognise the importance of maintaining the GID as the only political forum in which all of them participate.[99] The GID have also been useful in terms of shedding light on the parties' positions and interests and in increasing the understanding among the participants, and the degree of animosity is not the same as in 2008.[100] The work of the EUSR with regular visits to Abkhazia and South Ossetia has also been crucial in maintaining links with the breakaway regions and in upholding some relations.[101]

On the proposal by the EUSR, the EU in December 2009 approved the so-called 'engagement without recognition' strategy, with the central objective to de-isolate the breakaway regions and to provide an alternative perspective to the predominant Russian one. Since South Ossetia has practically remained closed for international assistance after the August war in 2008, the implementation of the EU's strategy has in this region been postponed.[102] The strategy has, however, been criticised for not being reinforced by sufficient actions on the ground,[103] and that it has rather turned into a strategy of "non-engagement".[104] Yet, it is difficult for the EU to engage with the breakaway regions without coming close to anything resembling state building or the strengthening of the *de facto* authorities, as this would be interpreted by Georgia as an implicit recognition of the entities.[105] The EU is often perceived as being biased towards Georgia, which undermines its relations and

[96] "Press Communiqué of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions", *OSCE*, *op. cit.*
[97] "Thirtieth Round of Geneva Talks", *Civil.ge*, 11 December 2014.
[98] Interview with Nicu Popescu, Senior Analyst, EUISS, via Skype, 10 March 2015.
[99] Merlingen & Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, p. 291.
[100] Interview with Sergi Kapanadze, *op. cit.*
[101] Interview with Thomas de Waal, *op. cit.*
[102] F. Smolnik, "Lessons Learned? The EU and the South Caucasus De Facto States", *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, no. 35-36, 15 February 2012, pp. 2-3.
[103] Interview with Thomas de Waal, *op. cit.,* & with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*
[104] L. Kvarchelia, "Perceptions of the EU in Abkhazia and prospects for the EU-Abkhazia engagement", *Analytical report 2012*, Conciliation Resources, 2012, p. 8.
[105] Interview with Bruno Coppieters, *op. cit.,* & with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.,* & with Thomas de Waal, *op. cit.*

engagement with the breakaway regions[106] and in turn contributes to the further drift of the entities towards Russia.[107] Some Abkhazians have claimed that if the EU were to take a neutral stance on the conflict, the Abkhaz society would not regard the EU's position as a threat and would hence trust it more and potentially allow it access to the Abkhaz side of the ABL.[108]

The EU's post-conflict rehabilitation assistance through the ENPI and the IfS has to some extent helped to prevent a further isolation of Abkhazia from Western countries, whereas South Ossetia has refused to accept any EU funding.[109] The COBERM has been highlighted as a valuable tool in terms of conflict transformation,[110] but the overall impact of the EU-funded small-scale confidence-building projects has been marginal at best.[111] The Georgian Law on Occupied Territories imposes legal restrictions on the EU-funded projects in the breakaway regions[112] and is perceived by Abkhazia and South Ossetia as an aggressive policy by Tbilisi. The EU reported in 2011 that the positions of Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia were growing even further apart,[113] and that if a "practical way forward"[114] is not found regarding the implementation of the Law on Occupied Territories, it will negatively impede on on-going and future EU-funded confidence-building projects in the breakaway regions.[115]

The EU has made several efforts to bring the conflict parties closer together and to change the degree of incompatibility between their respective positions, through political negotiations in the GID, by trying to create equal opportunities for people in the breakaway regions with the 'engagement without recognition' strategy as well as by ENPI and IfS-funded confidence-building projects. However, the impact of the

[106] Interview with a Senior Associate Eurasia, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, via e-mail, 30 March 2015.
[107] Frichova Grono, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
[108] Kvarchelia, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
[109] Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts, op. cit.*, p. 93.
[110] Interview with a Senior Associate Eurasia, *op. cit.,* & with a Georgian official, *op. cit.,* & with Sergi Kapanadze, *op. cit.*
[111] Merlingen & Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, p. 283.
[112] European Commission, *2010 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability PART 1*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
[113] European Commission, *2011 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability Volume 1*, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-41.
[114] European Commission, *2010 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability PART 1*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[115] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

EU's efforts has been limited where the practical conditions on the ground as well as the overall conflict environment hampered activities contributing to conflict transformation, leading to a vicious cycle. The positions of the conflict parties remain locked and incompatible where the identities and interests of the parties have not been brought closer together to any significant extent. When taking this into account, the accumulated contributions of the EU's conflict resolution policies are considered to have contributed to the achievement of the policy objective of conflict transformation *to a poor degree*.

International conflict management

Tensions between the conflict parties have at several times arisen since the ceasefire was reached in August 2008, with hostile rhetoric, provocations and accusations of increased military presence along the ABLs,[116] which have at times generated speculations over a possible renewed conflict.[117] In this regard, the GID has served as a useful forum for mediation efforts where the co-chairs have managed to generate an overall calm and stable conflict situation, despite persistent tensions between the conflict parties.[118] The GID has consistently been marked by considerable disagreements between the parties and a lack of tangible progress, and they have at several times ended up in deadlocks and disruptions.[119] Yet, due to efforts made by the EUSR and the other co-chairs, the discussions have repeatedly been reconvened.[120] The informing role played by the EUMM has also been highlighted as an essential counterforce to de-stabilising activities and as a deterrent to a further escalation of conflicts.[121] By investigating accusations made and reporting on the developments on the ground, the EUMM observers constitute an important source of information, as there would otherwise only be the partial statements by the parties that could potentially provoke an escalation of conflicts. However, the EUMM's capability to fully monitor the situation on the ground is, as previously mentioned, limited by its

[116] "CrisisWatch Database", *op. cit.*, 1 April-1 May 2009, 1 July-1 October 2013, & "Sixteenth Round of Geneva Talks", *Civil.ge*, 8 June 2011.
[117] "Merabishvili: Russian Attack Ruled Out in Near Future", *Civil.ge*, 7 March 2009, & "Sixteenth Round of Geneva Talks", *op. cit*.
[118] "Tenth Round of Geneva Talks", *Civil.ge*, 20 March 2010, & "Press Communiqué of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions", *Consilium*, 4 October 2011, & "Press Communiqué of the Co-Chairs of Geneva Discussions", *EUMM*, 6 November 2013.
[119] "Tense Talks in Eleventh Round of Geneva Discussions", *Civil.ge*, 9 June 2010, & "Sixteenth Round of Geneva Talks", *op. cit*., & "Press Communiqué of the Co-Chairs of Geneva Discussions", *EUMM,* 18 June 2014.
[120] "Twelfth Round of Geneva Talks", *Civil.ge*, 26 July 2010, & "Press Communiqué of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions", *Consilium*, *op. cit.*
[121] Interview with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.,* & with Sergi Kapanadze, *op. cit.*

denied access to the breakaway regions.[122] Additionally, the increasing demarcation activities by Russia along the South Ossetian ABL since 2012[123] and the recent signatures of the treaties between Russia and the breakaway regions have prompted a tense and difficult discussion environment in the GID.[124]

In the present situation with confrontations between Georgia and Russia, it is difficult for the EU to bring Georgia and the breakaway regions closer together in terms of creating incentives for a settlement,[125] where the attempts by the EU have only achieved highly limited progress.[126] The EU has tried to exercise leverage on Georgia to make it more open in its attitude towards the breakaway regions[127] and the policy of engagement without recognition has to some extent strengthened Abkhazia by preventing it from a further isolation from Western countries.[128] Nevertheless, the EU's support of the Georgian position in terms of its territorial integrity and the non-recognition of the breakaway entities have in the latter led to a perception of the EU as being biased towards Georgia.[129] Consequently, the EU lacks the necessary leverage in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be able to create incentives for a settlement.[130] The breakaway entities' confidence in the EU's capacity to mediate and to deliver an outcome that is acceptable to them is considerably low due to the very same reasons. In addition, political divisions within the EU prevent it from undertaking a strong policy line with the potential of impacting the dynamics and the balance of power between the conflict parties, and could potentially also block progress towards a negotiated settlement.[131] The ability of the EU to create incentives for a settlement is, however, also greatly dependent on the will of the parties, where the different perspectives on the conflicts remain entrenched and hinder progress to this end.[132]

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[122] Interview with Bruno Coppieters, *op. cit.*
[123] "EUMM concerned about situation at South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line", *EUMM*, 21 September 2012, & "CrisisWatch Database", *op. cit.*, 1 July-1 Oct 2013.
[124] "Thirty-First Round of Geneva Talks", *Civil.ge*, 19 March 2015.
[125] Interview with Bruno Coppieters, *op. cit.*
[126] Interview with a Senior Associate Eurasia, *op. cit.,* & with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*
[127] Frichova Grono, *op. cit.*, p. 23, & interview with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*
[128] Interview with Bruno Coppieters, *op. cit.*
[129] Interview with a Senior Associate Eurasia, *op. cit.,* & with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*
[130] Interview with Nicu Popescu, *op. cit.,* & with a Senior Associate Eurasia, *op. cit.,* & with Thomas de Waal, *op. cit.*
[131] Frichova Grono, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-31.
[132] Interview with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*

The GID has fallen short of generating much concrete progress in terms of agreements between the conflict parties, and it has at several times been disrupted or ended up in deadlocks. However, the EUSR has played an essential role in keeping the discussions on-going, and the GID with the input of the EUMM reports and investigations have at several occasions managed to contain the potential escalation of renewed conflicts by offsetting provocations. Yet, the continued Russian demarcation activities and the recent signature of the treaties between Russia and the breakaway regions remain issues of great concern. No speculations have yet been made regarding a possible escalation of conflict, but the deteriorated relations between Georgia and Russia hamper the EU's ability to create incentives for a settlement of the conflicts. The EU additionally lacks the necessary leverage and ability to change the balance of power between the conflict parties. The accumulated contributions of the EU's conflict resolution policies have hence contributed to the achievement of one of the elements of international conflict management, that is, to contain the escalation of conflicts. However, taking into account that they have failed to create incentives for a settlement – the second element –, the EU's conflict resolution policies are considered to have contributed to the achievement of the policy objective of international conflict management *to some degree.*

Conflict settlement

No negotiations on the international status of the breakaway regions have so far been undertaken between the parties, and there is currently no concrete perspective for a conflict settlement.[133] Some authors claim that the time for status negotiations between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia has passed and that the breakaway regions are likely to remain *de facto* independent and protected by Russia.[134] The prospects for finding a settlement of the conflicts are as distant as they were before the August war in 2008, but the Russian recognition of the breakaway regions' independence has caused a new line of thinking[135] where it is impossible for Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia to go back to the *status quo* prior to the war.[136] Georgia regards the breakaway regions as illegally occupied territories, and

[133] Interview with Bruno Coppieters, *op. cit.,* & with Nicu Popescu, *op. cit.,* & with Thomas de Waal, *op. cit.,* & with an EU official, EEAS, Brussels, 11 March 2015.
[134] Merlingen & Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, p. 289.
[135] Interview with Sergi Kapanadze, *op. cit.*
[136] Frichova Grono, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

considers only a settlement that is underpinned by the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty of its internationally recognised borders acceptable.[137]

The perspectives on the conflicts remain very different. Russia, on the one hand, sees the conflicts as between Georgia and the breakaway regions where it only plays the role of a security guarantor similar to that of the EU. Georgia, on the other hand, perceives the conflict as between Russia and herself with Russia being the occupier and aggressor.[138] To some extent all of the parties have an interest in maintaining the conflicts, since they attract international attention and engagement in Georgia,[139] are used by Russia as a function of its policy towards Georgia and the West,[140] and more or less imply independence for the breakaway regions.[141] The interest to find a solution to the conflicts has also moved down on the political agenda of all relevant actors. The attention of the EU has been drawn away from the region by the financial crisis, the 'Arab Spring' and most lately the crisis in Ukraine.[142] However, also the lack of political will among the conflict parties weakens the motivation and interests of the EU to direct attention and resources to find a settlement of the conflicts.[143]

The GID's lack of progress and tangible outcomes has further on led some critics to claim that "a means to an end has become an end in itself".[144] However, a potential future settlement could still be found in the format of the GID since they gather all of the relevant actors.[145] In this regard, the EU plays an important role in upholding and maintaining the GID,[146] but without the political will of the participants to find compromises and mutually acceptable solutions it is impossible for the EU to achieve any progress towards finding a settlement.[147] The EU has further on been identified as the main driving force and the most influential co-chair in the GID.[148] This is much due to the fact that the EU has more room for manoeuvre and can be more outspoken

[137] Interview with a Georgian official, *op. cit.*
[138] Interview with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*
[139] Interview with an EU official, EEAS, *op. cit.*
[140] Interview with a Senior Associate Eurasia, *op. cit.*
[141] Interview with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*
[142] Interview with a Senior Associate Eurasia, *op. cit.,* & with Thomas de Waal, *op. cit.* & with Sergi Kapanadze, *op. cit.*
[143] Interview with Sergi Kapanadze, *op. cit.*
[144] Smolnik, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[145] Interview with Sergi Kapanadze, *op. cit.*
[146] *Ibid.*
[147] Interview with Thomas de Waal, *op. cit.,* & International Alert, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
[148] Interview with Thomas de Waal, *op. cit.,* & with Sergi Kapanadze, *op. cit.*

compared to the UN and the OSCE, which are bound by the position of Russia.[149] Yet, the EU's position as mediator is weakened by its support for Georgia's territorial integrity, a partiality that goes against the red lines of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia.[150]

There seems to be a resounding consensus on the lack of a current perspective to find a settlement of the conflicts as the perceptions and positions of the parties still remain too incompatible and entrenched. The EU has not facilitated or supported any negotiations on the international status of the breakaway regions, neither has an agreement by the parties on a common institutional framework been reached. However, this is largely due to the fact that the overall conflict environment has not been conducive to the undertaking of such negotiations. In this light, the EU's conflict policies are considered to have contributed to the achievement of the policy objective of conflict settlement *to a poor degree*.

Conclusion

A summary of the main findings of the qualitative case study is below presented in the form of a table.

Table 1: The contributions of the EU's conflict resolution policies in Georgia 2008-2015

Conflict resolution	*To a great degree*	*To some degree*	*To a poor degree*
Conflict prevention	**X**		
Conflict transformation			**X**
International conflict management		**X**	
Conflict settlement			**X**

Source: compiled by the author.

The main contribution of the EU's conflict resolution policies in Georgia in 2008-2015 is considered by both academics and policy makers to have been within the policy objective of conflict prevention. In this context, the efforts of the EU have to a great degree prevented the incompatibility of positions between the conflict parties from escalating to open violence. The role of the EUMM has been an essential element in stabilising the security situation and as a deterrent to a further escalation of hostilities,

[149] Interview with Thomas de Waal, *op. cit.,* & with an EU official, Office of the EUSR, *op. cit.*
[150] Frichova Grono, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

even though the denied access to the breakaway regions continues to prevent the mission from fully implementing its mandate. The short-term goal within this policy objective has consequently been achieved with no open violence until present time. Nevertheless, the establishment of a post-settlement security mechanism still remains to be realised.

Yet, the progress made in the area of conflict prevention has not affected the work done by the EU in the field of conflict transformation, where the EU's conflict resolution policies have only to a poor degree contributed to the achievement of the policy objective. The efforts of the GID in terms of bringing the parties' views and interests closer together have only generated highly limited results where the positions of the parties to a large extent remain incompatible. The perceived bias of the EU towards Georgia has undermined its relations and engagement with the breakaway regions. The Georgian Law on Occupied Territories additionally restricts the implementation of ENPI and IfS-funded projects for confidence building. The EU's profile in international conflict management, namely the support of Georgia's position for territorial integrity and non-recognition of the breakaway entities, has in this regard weakened the EU's position in the field of conflict transformation. The incompatible and entrenched positions between the parties also negatively impact on conflict prevention, where an agreement on a post-settlement security mechanism yet remains to be reached. However, the long-term timeframe required for the realisation of the policy objective of conflict transformation must not be overlooked and perhaps progress in this area can only be expected in a more distant future.

The progress made in the field of conflict prevention has to some extent been reproduced in the area of international conflict management, where the EU's conflict resolution policies have contained the escalation of renewed conflicts. The EUSR has in this regard played an essential role in maintaining the GID despite substantial disagreements between the parties. The GID has served as a counter force to de-stabilising activities on the ground and to hostile rhetoric between the parties that could potentially have escalated into further conflicts. However, the lack of progress in terms of conflict transformation negatively impacts on international conflict management where the scope for the EU to find incentives for a settlement remains highly limited due to the incompatible and entrenched positions of the

parties. In this context, the EU's conflict resolution policies have failed to create incentives for a settlement as the EU lacks the necessary leverage on the parties and the ability to change the balance of power between them.

The lack of progress in the fields of conflict transformation and international conflict management to a large extent explains why no negotiations on the international status of the breakaway regions have been undertaken. No concrete perspectives for a settlement of the conflicts presently exist and the EU's conflict resolution policies have only to a poor degree contributed to its achievement. The incompatible positions and the different perspectives of the conflicts among the parties currently prevent a mutually acceptable solution to the question of status, and the lack of incentives for finding a settlement continues to hamper any progress towards this end. The prospect to find a settlement in the format of the GID still exists, however without the political will of the parties such attempts will not prove fruitful. Yet the lack of progress in the field of conflict settlement has so far not generated any violent confrontation or escalation of conflict between the parties. Moreover, the objective of conflict settlement is the final end of the process of conflict resolution and patience is hence needed if progress in the other fields of conflict resolution is to generate more favourable conditions to successfully reach a conflict settlement.

According to Coppieters, a differentiated, balanced and patient approach to conflict resolution should in principle allow for positive results to be achieved in the shorter and the longer term.[151] What has become evident in this case study is the interrelatedness of the policy objectives where the emphasis or progress of one policy objective clearly has an effect on the others. The lack of progress in terms of conflict transformation has had a direct impact on progress in the other policy areas and in order to contribute to the overall process of conflict resolution, the EU needs to increasingly focus and prioritise its efforts in the field of conflict transformation. The profile of the EU in the field of international conflict management might come at a too large expense of conflict transformation policies, worsening the overall prospects for conflict resolution. The EU should try and find ways to avoid this clash between the policy objectives, and what the EU could do in this context is to continue to push the Georgian government to increase its engagement with the breakaway regions and to ease up the Law on Occupied Territories. Nevertheless, the EU needs to keep in

[151] Coppieters, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

mind the specific timeframes for the realisation of each of the policy objectives. Whereas the policies within the different fields should be pursued in parallel and closely linked to each other, they must not be suspended or held contingent on progress or failures in other areas of conflict resolution.

The aim of this paper has been to explore to what extent the EU has impacted on the conflict resolution process of Georgia's secessionist conflicts in 2008-2015, and whether this could be related to the objectives, priorities and time perspectives of the EU's conflict resolution policies. The empirical findings of the case study show that the EU's conflict resolution policies to a great degree have contributed to the achievement of the objective of conflict prevention. However, the EU's efforts have only furthered the realisation of the objective of international conflict management to some degree, and to the achievement of the objectives of conflict transformation and conflict settlement to a poor degree. When taking this into account, the paper argues that the EU only to a limited extent has impacted on the conflict resolution process of Georgia's secessionist conflicts in 2008-2015, which can be related to the objectives, priorities and time perspectives of the EU's conflict resolution policies.

Beyond the empirical contribution filling into the current research gap on the EU's role in conflict resolution, the paper also intends to provide a theoretical framework of how the EU's involvement and impact could be assessed and understood. Coppieters' differentiated approach has in this paper proved a useful analytical tool to describe and assess the impact of the EU's conflict resolution policies, confirming its continued validity as one possible analytical framework in the case of Georgia, whose application might also prove useful in other conflict resolution contexts. Moreover, the findings of this research may help inform the EU's future conflict resolution policies in Georgia, and potentially as well in other conflict resolution contexts where the EU is active or about to be engaged. To conclude, in order for the EU to have a true impact on the conflict resolution process of Georgia's secessionist conflicts and to achieve positive results in both the shorter and longer term, it needs to undertake a differentiated, balanced and patient approach to conflict resolution.

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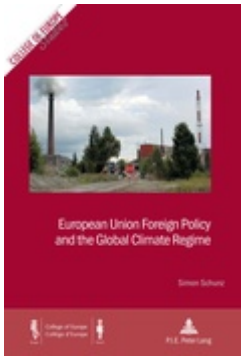

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