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Projecting Security at Hot-Spots Borders through ESDP-CSDP Missions: The cases of Georgia and Ukraine-Moldova

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Security at the borders in the post Cold War era

International Security Studies (ISS) has been widened and deepened around its core of strategic studies which has traditionally focused on the military agenda and the use of force as the prominent relevant issues in the field.

From a realist perspective the state is the referent object and national security is conceived as a synonym of state security. The Cold War era was deeply shaped by nuclear threats and military confrontation between the great powers. In the post bipolar context the strategic studies have still focused on the military dimension of menaces posed by nuclear proliferation, wars and terrorism (especially after 9/11).

While the mainstream in ISS is still concerns on the military threats to the state, other paradigms have taken "security rather than war or defence as its key concept" (Buzan and Hansen, 2010, p. 1). Indeed, a conceptual shift occurred in the literature: the traditional view has been challenged by a wide range of approaches: post structuralism, conventional and critical constructivism, feminism, peace research, critical security studies, human security, and the Copenhagen School[1].

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[1] For a comprehensive analysis on the evolution of ISS see, among others, Buzan and Hansen (2010).

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The evolution in modern warfare, especially the dramatic increase of intra-state conflicts, has made the need for new conceptual and linguistic tools surface with force (Van Crevald 1991; Kaldor 1999; Smith 2006). The debate over the supposed changing nature of the warfare is still lively and intense[2]. For instance, the current situation in Afghanistan well illustrates the contents of the controversial strategic discussion. "Traditional" interstate industrial conflicts have been replaced by the so-called "wars amongst the people" (Smith, 2006 p XII). According to Metz and Miller, "Today the world has entered another period when sustained, large-scale conventional war between states is unlikely" (2004, p.1).

Therefore, the western armed forces have faced a profound transformation in last two decades, in order to adapt operative and conceptual paradigms to the new multidimensional approach to security problems (Giacomello and Nation, 2009; Gray, 2005; Murray, 1999). Also the European Union has officially adopted and promoted such view[3]. The EU, as well as its members, started to deploy troops in a wide range of "Peace Support Operations"(PSO)[4]. "*Since the end of the Cold War states have increasingly come under pressure to intervene militarily and, in fact, have intervened militarily to protect citizens other than their own from humanitarian disaster*" (Finnemore, 1996, p.153). Modern armies would not be able to specialise only in warfighting or peacekeeping, nor could they shun humanitarian tasks. They would have to be capable of all three at any given moment. Humanitarian assistance and reconstruction become very complicated tasks in a context in which insurgents, terrorists or criminals aim at destabilizing the situation on the ground.

The links between arms smuggling, drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorism or insurgency is unambiguous looking at the activities carried out by Taliban, Al Qaeda, former IRA, FARC or Egyptian Islamic Jihad[5]. I According to Gustafson: "Globalisation has facilitated the interconnected nature of global organised crime, insurgency and terrorism" (2010, p.74). In recent decades a diverse set of political, military, economic and

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[2] The debate on the transformation of war is immense. For a summary see, among others: Giacomello G., Badialetti G. (2009).

[3] For an European perspective see the European Security Strategy: A *Secure Europe in a Better World*, 2003

[4] On PSO see the SIPRI dataset, available at: <www.sipri.org/contents/conflict/conflictdatasets.html>.

[5] For a detailed analysis on that see Gustafson. For an insightful perspective on the relationship between organized crime and war see, among others, Duffield (2003) and Strazzari (2008)

social challenges (e.g. ballistic missiles, illegal immigration, narcotics, terrorism) has elevated perception of vulnerability (Strerling, 2009).

Indeed, nation state must confront a multifaceted and complex threat: smuggled guns from abroad affected the local violence in the UK, criminal gangs as "Los Zetas" are destabilizing Mexico., Colombian drug traffickers aim at transforming Giunea-Bissau in the first "narco-state (Strazzari, Coticchia, Vivarelli 2010), etc. In other words, stable areas become new zones of turmoil because of the consequences caused by growing link between traffickers, insurgents and terrorists. This is true for national state as well as for regional organizations as the European Union and, in fact, instability at its borders is a new concern to the EU.

The end of the Cold War has altered the international structure as well as the sense of terms and notions. Words as "threat", "security" and even "borders" assume quite a different meaning in the new strategic context. The armed forces of the European countries, which mainly deployed their troops for the homeland security in the bipolar era, have been constantly involved in last two decades in military operations abroad, facing a wide range of menaces to "national security": terrorism, organized crime, regional instability, illegal immigration, drug and weapons trafficking.

Globalisation has also transformed the means by which terrorists, domestic street gangs, transnational drug cartels, overseas insurgents and transnational financial criminals operate across the borders. As stressed by the SOCA's (Serious Organised Crime Agency) UK 2008 Threat Assessment: "The supply of firearms into the UK by serious organised criminals is aided by the many varied methods of moving prohibited firearms across borders, and the difficulty in monitoring the high volume of imported goods [the number of firearms] could potentially be much greater than figures indicate" (2008, p.21).

Moreover, the shift from a static military standing to an international activism has affected also the concept of *limes* that has been widened in the post bipolar era. For instance, the NATO troops employed for decades at the western European frontiers, "waiting" for an eventual Soviet attack, are nowadays engaged in the Helmand region (Afghanistan) aiming at protecting homeland security from terrorism.

Whatever you assess such strategic choice, it is worth notice that western soldiers are usually deployed abroad for defending national security through the monitoring of permeable borders in conflict or post conflict regions, far from national frontiers. As the recent wars in Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia well illustrate, success or failure of contemporary military interventions are deeply affected by the level of effectiveness in the way through which the boundaries of the state are controlled. Indeed, the armed forces are employed for monitoring a cease-fire, avoiding the existence of safe-areas for insurgency, restricting the influx of human and material resources that would be promote a military escalation enhancing regional instability. All these aims are crucial for peace-keeping, peace-enforcement, nation-building and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.

Therefore, border control activities abroad have theoretically two main purposes: defending national security against "new" threats" such terrorism, drug smuggling or instability in failed states and guarantying the success of the military interventions abroad avoiding external harmful influences over the territory of the operation. An effective and efficient monitoring at the boundaries heavily depends on military tools, availability of troops and trainers for local forces, adequate doctrines, and diplomatic cooperation among neighbors states.

In contemporary conflicts there is an evident correlation between the permeability of boundaries and the instability of military or political crises. General disdain has emerged in the second half of the 20 century for the continuing utility of walls, fortress and other barriers, especially because "the improved precision and destructiveness of weapons as well as enhanced mobility of militaries appeared to render physical works obsolete"(Sterling 2009, p.1). However, in the 21 century a wide range of nations (India, Afghanistan, Israel, USA, etc) have resorted to barriers and walls for contrasting a military menace or "just" for supervising cross border traffic.

The safeguard of the borders is the necessary premise for controlling the territory, which is widely considered one of the key principles for winning wars in 21st century (Ricks, 2006). According to General Petraeus more "boots on the ground" had helped to enhance the

control over the Iraqi territory, confronting guerrilla tactics. The Obama administration is (hardly) trying to reproduce the positive effects of the surge in Afghanistan[6].

The control of the territory comprises obviously also the maritime context. Growing international efforts in fighting piracy well describe the relevance of maritime patrol activities. For instance, the European Defence Agency deeply focuses on vessel traffic monitoring systems (VTMS) in order to increase the situation awareness in strategic area such as the Horn of Africa, where the EU has deployed the operation "Atalanta", with the main goal of contrasting piracy and preventing assaults to commercial ships (de Guttry, 2010).

Indeed, the European Union is playing a crucial role in promoting stability and conflict resolution across the whole world. However external EU borders have a particular relevance and EU is becoming far more active across its periphery, with the aim of fostering stability and development within its own territory. In this context, it is worth of attention the relevance attributed by the EU to border control activities among the tasks assigned to its civil and military missions. On the one hand, the CSDP operations can be a crucial instrument for promoting stability along the EU boundaries by contrasting "new" threats as smuggling or terrorism. On the other, the case of the EU mission is particularly significant because control over borders has become not just a key feature of the intervention but its main purpose of a few specific Border Assistance Missions. What is common to these two types of CSDP missions (those where border control is one of the confidence-building tools and those where this is the core of the mission) is the fact that military forces are deployed in missions with civilian nature[7].

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[6] Looking carefully at the lessons learnt of the Iraqi COIN strategy well illustrate the current problems actually faced in Afghanistan. In fact, the decline of the violence in Iraq in last three years has been only partially related to the "surge", depending mainly on the agreements reached with the Sunni rebels. In other words, more boots on the ground were useful but they did not represented the main variable in the US effective strategy. Indeed the strategic framework deeply altered by sectarian violence and ethnic cleansing was the "precondition" that fostered that deal., The Sunni feared an incoming hegemony of Shia militia groups and, therefore, the US support to the "awakening movements" represented a vital way out. Moreover, Iraq and Afghanistan are different countries at geographical and political level. For instance, while the army under Saddam was a consolidated institution, the Afghan armed forces have disappeared in last thirty years.

[7] This is to say that the approach realized by the EU trough its CSDP mission is first of all peculiar for its being in the field with military means but in the context of purely civilian activities. Be the objective the facilitation of cooperation between parties of a conflict on border issues or the direct responsibility of

The goal of this research is to shed light on the way through which the EU forces are contributing to resolve the conflicts about and around borders. The probe aims at stressing strategies and conceptual tools used to provide security in instable areas at EU periphery. The research question is how and to what extent the CSDP missions deployed in the European neighborhood have promoted stability by enhancing both border control activities and normalization along post conflict boundaries.

This paper is a first probe to understand the role played by CSDP missions in preventing threats for the EU security fostering a peaceful settlement of frozen or unresolved conflicts.

Through two selected case studies the research will try and understand what kind of security provider the EU is in its neighbourhood. Primary (official documents) and secondary (literature) sources will be used to illustrate the comprehensive framework of the EU's approach in the field, highlighting main risks, problems, doctrines and lessons learnt.

In the next section the authors describe the overall EU approach in promoting security along its external borders. Then the specific context of the two missions, EUMM – Georgia and EUBAM –Moldova/Ukraine will be analyzed in more details.

European policy at the borders

The relevance of EU external borders has changed as the internal integration among members, the enlargement of membership, the changing nature of external threats have shaped the development of the EU project.

External EU borders have inherently been relevant for the EU project as the first and more tangible sign of demarcation between insiders and outsiders in the EU family. However, the economic perception of EU external borders has been long predominant as long as the EC /EU was mainly focused on the process of internal integration in view of a common market and the application of a common regime of external tariffs and barriers. As the integration process deprived national borders within the EU of much their original

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borders' control, the EU missions realize the features of a "smart power" (Nye 2010), whose hard capabilities are used to develop its soft crisis management powers.

significance and provided common frontiers to its member states, these were economic in the first place.

The security dimension of the common external borders of the EU has suddenly emerged as a priority in the EU agenda in the aftermath of the collapse of the Cold-War geopolitical order and the subsequent emergence of unconventional and global threats to which states' borders proved to be highly permeable. Together with the establishment of a Common Foreign and Security Policy that should have provided foreign policy tools to address externally generated but still very vaguely located security challenges, Justice and Home Affairs policies were put in place in a process of externalization of relevant internal policies to tackle the threats before they reach the EU territory.

The shock of the Kosovo crisis at the EU doorstep and the inability of the EU to fill the "capability –expectation gap" (Kamov 2006, p.49) because of the lack of political and military capabilities for crisis management demonstrated the inadequacy of the instruments devised up to that moment and prompted a change in the perception of the nexus between EU external borders and its internal security.

EU borderlands, rather than simply borders, have started since then to be more comprehensively approached as a neighborhood forming what Buzan defined a "security complex", namely "a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another", whose stability is in its turn crucial and necessary for Europe's own security.

Building security in the EU neighborhood has been soon recognized as one of the strategic objectives of the EU as they were singled out in the 2003 European Security Strategy, where it is clearly said that " neighbours who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organised crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on our borders all pose problems for Europe" (European Security Strategy). Furthermore, extending the zone of security around the EU periphery has become even more relevant after the latest rounds of enlargement have profoundly altered the number, identity and the nature of neighbors surrounding the external borders of the EU.

In this context enlargement as a traditional foreign policy tool able to promote the stabilisation of countries with the prospect of either integration or partnership with the EU[8], could only be one of the approaches to export security beyond borders.

A number of different but integrated instruments and strategies are needed in order to address non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, migration, trafficking and transnational organized crime as well as the management of violent conflicts. The broad policy framework that the EU has created for "securing the neighborhood" by abiding to the principle of establishing "comprehensive and cooperative relations in political, economic, cultural and security fields with the States concerned…in order to increase security" is the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This is described as enabling the EU "to bring together various internal and external instruments more effectively , working with our neighbours to tackle new threats e.g. cooperation against terrorism, tackling the root causes of extremism, thwarting international organized crime, contributing to resolving conflicts"[9]. Conflict resolution has thus been set as one of the priorities of the ENP as a consequence of the fact that the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and the former USSR – that is areas at EU borders - "are rife with old and new ethno-political conflicts" besides being viewed as the primary source of many of the non-traditional threats (let alone the energy dependence discourse).

In the following section we are interested in analyzing whether and to what extent the EU has used the ESDP/CSDP instruments and capacities developed over the last decade in order to specifically pursue its conflict resolution objectives in crises that either interest the areas around its external borders or are around borders themselves.

Certainly the issue of the EU ability to manage crises through the CSDP dimension of the Common Foreign and Security Policy is not only relevant in the discourse around providing security at borders but has mainly to do with the broader debate over the EU capacity to act as a global security provider. However, our aim is to try and identify a few specificities of the CSDP approach to crises around and about borders in view of possibly

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[8] See Diez T., Stetter T., and Albert M., (2006).
[9] Landaburu E., quoted in Kamov G., EU's role in conflict resolution: the case of the Eastern enlargement and neighbourhood policy areas, Institut Europeenn des Hautes Etudes Internationales, June 2006, p. 51.

identifying opportunities for an ever greater integration of CSDP instruments into EU policies for stabilization and promotion of security at EU borders. In the specific case, the request for more CSDP instruments into the European Neighborhood Policy is indeed ever more frequently presented (Popescu 2005).

As pointed out by Kamov (p.11), the European Neighborhood Policy "originated to address the fact that upcoming enlargement would make Ukraine, Belarus and later on Moldova new land neighbours" and the "concerns about security, immigration and political cooperation" that this had raised. The policy combines elements of stabilisation and integration, blending "elements from the enlargement strategy with those of previous partnership strategies such as the Barcelona Process, without aiming at full membership" (Kamov p.12).   Although the EU has been emphasising that the prosperity, stability and security of the neighbours rather than their EU membership have to be considered an objective in its own right to be pursued within the ENP framework, it is however noticed how this sort of conditionality without the perspective of membership (which is the ultimate goal for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia) does not seem to be appropriate to convince the neighbours to carry out the EU desired reforms (Landaburu E. 2006 in Kamov p.12).

Moreover, the security challenges posed by the unresolved/frozen conflicts that are mainly concentrated in the Eastern borderlands of the EU, require that the conflict resolution dimension of EU policies towards these regions is adequately implemented, in a way that traditional approaches of membership and partnership are not able to do. Threats from around external borders of the EU are a combination of non-traditional soft nature and traditional and military nature and as such they do require a comprehensive approach in which both dimensions are addressed adequately.

The way the EU has both originally and effectively developed its own concept and practice of crisis management, with the peculiar combination of soft and hard security tools, offers credible guarantees for such an approach to be   developed in dealing with insecurity at/around its borders. As many contemporary crises cannot be identified as a classical state of armed warfare between clearly identifiable parties and are often of an

intra-state nature, with their roots to be often found in a mixture of social, economic and political factors, they do require the pursuit of a solution through the application of an equally variegated instruments of crisis management, not only armed forces. On this ground crisis management objectives are pursued by the EU through a number of instruments among which CSDP military operations and civilian missions of crisis management. The process of European integration has been in itself a tool for the management of crisis' potential since the origins of the European Communities and enlargement policy, extending the Union's norms, rules, opportunities and constraints to successive applicants has made instability and conflict on the Continent decreasing likely" (Missiroli, 2003, p.17). Also, the commitment to peace, freedom and prosperity pursued through the implementation of EU common policies has been able over the last 60 years to make the EU a "soft power" that *rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others… with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate as having moral authority" (J. Nye).* With its inherent power of attraction and policies that try influence the resolution of the conflicts in the countries interested by them, the ENP being the most important one for neighbour countries at the moment, the EU acts as a framework in which institutional alternatives to the conflicts are offered.

However, the security dimension of the CFSP, developed in the last decade, has provided the EU with a new role in crisis management: one in which the EU is not only a framework for the resolution of conflicts but also and foremost an actor intentionally pursuing the objective of influencing the short-term strategies of the parties in a conflict and leading them to an agreement. Through CSDP missions the EU "has taken a lead in bringing security with a presence on the ground" (Helga-Maria Schmidt, Schuman Lecture 2009). CSDP missions have thus the potential to add a proper conflict resolution dimension to crisis management approaches pursued through traditional EU policy instruments.

CSDP in EU Eastern Neighborhood

The attention of the next sections of the paper is focused on the Eastern neighbourhood of the EU and the CSDP missions deployed in response to two conflicts over borders, the one in Georgia, which has known a new escalation in 2008, and the unresolved conflict in Transdniestria . As late as 2005 the EU neighbours with conflicts on their territories were those to "have benefited the least from recent developments in ESDP" (Popescu 2005 p.11). As pointed out by Popescu, "in Georgia the EU deployed a twelve-person Rule of Law mission in July 2004 and a three manned border monitoring mission based in Tbilisi rather than at the actual border" and these were "the sole examples of the used of ESDP tools in the Eastern neighbourhood, where so many conflicts are deadlocked" (2005, p.11).

Today, EU engagement in its eastern neighbourhood has increased significantly as witnessed by several simultaneous events. The first EC Communication on Wider Europe in 2003 stressed the role of the EU to "facilitate the settlement of disputes over Palestine, the Western Sahara and Transdniestria" thus asking a greater EU involvement in crisis management as a "tangible demonstration of the EU willingness to share the burden of conflict resolution in the neighbouring countries"[10]. Also, the European Security Strategy in the same year highlighted the importance of the South Caucasus as a specific case for attention among the group of EU neighbors. Moreover, the accession of Romania to the EU put Moldova, and its conflict, in the EU direct neighbourhood[11] and revived new EU Eastern European members' interest in the region due to geographic and historical reasons (Isachenzo, 2010).

If we look at the CSDP missions that are formally engaged in borders assistance, the EU has currently three missions deployed – the EU Border Assistance mission to Ukraine and Moldova, a EUBAM Rafah (Palestine) and a tiny EU Border Support Team to Georgia (the EUSR BST). However, the authors have chosen to analyse the EUMM Georgia and the

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[10] EC Communication Wider Europe— Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, COM(2003) 104 final, 11 March 2003, p. 16.

[11] "The South Caucasus" as Dov Lynch explains (2003) "were promoted from a footnote in the Commission's Wider Europe Communication of March 2003 to an example of a region in which the EU should play a more active role in the European Security Strategy several months later". According to Lynch, this reconsideration of the importance of the region to the EU's security was conditioned "more by the initiatives of a few member states (Finland, Sweden and the Baltic states), rather than a clear and focused strategy towards the region".

EUBAM Moldova following a twofold rationale. On the one hand the focus is deliberately set on the Eastern border lands of the EU as existing conflicts in that region are perceived as those on which the EU may have both a greater leverage and interest for influencing their resolution. On the other hand the concept of conflicts at/around borders adopted here is a broad one, where borders can be both the issue at stake and also a catalyst for broader claims and grievances and the source of less visible threats to security in and outside the EU.

EUMM Georgia is not a border assistance mission from a technical point of view. However, the monitoring of the Georgian side of the administrative borders as well as Georgian movements in the areas adjacent to the administrative borders are two major responsibilities of the mission that had very much prominence in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 conflict. Moreover, EUMM Georgia deployment had the objective of helping to "stabilize the situation along the administrative borders between undisputed Georgian territory on the one hand and the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, on the other" (Grevi, Helly and Keohane, 2009, p.380) and is clearly a test case for the EU direct involvement in conflict resolution and post-conflict stabilization in the recently acquired conflict- ridden neighbourhood.

EUBAM Moldova is on the contrary a proper Border Assistance Mission and has EU customs and border guards experts and local personnel deployed. The focus on border security stems from the nature of the challenged posed by the Transdniestrian conflict, namely organised crime, corruption, proliferation of weapons, customs fraud, smuggling and trafficking. Border Assistance Mission has been deemed as the most appropriate response to the specific non-conventional nature of the threats posed to the EU by this specific frozen conflict. The preventive character of the Mission is worth to be stressed and the contribution to a secure management of borders in the region is considered as highly functional to both preventing traditional conflict to erupt and internal EU stability to be preserved.

The different nature of the missions deployed in the two regions well illustrates the different threats posed to the EU by these two unresolved conflicts and the responses

devised by the EU. On the one hand the EUMM Georgia is a post-conflict mission deployed with the marked objective of helping the stabilisation of the region and its troubles borders. The aims is to neutralise traditional threats that may come to the security of the EU neighbourhood in case of a resurgence of armed conflict. On the other hand the EUBAM specifically addresses the stabilisation of boundaries and the enhancement of borders' control. The unresolved conflict over Transdniestria is the very issue at stake in the EU's eyes: unconventional threats to EU security are to be prevented and halted.

EU growing attention to Georgia

As clearly pointed out by Dov Lynch, Georgia matters to the EU because it "embodies the security challenges facing the EU" (Lynch 2006, p.9). Georgia presents a unique combination of security risks and threats: it "suffers from two unresolved conflicts on its territory, deep state weakness, worrying levels of corruption and organised crime"; it lies on EU's border, in an immediate neighbourhood whose stability and prosperity the EU has discovered to be of great interest for its own stability and prosperity; it is in a difficult process of democracy and state building that may easily be reverted if the country slipped back "in the vitious circle of state failure " (Lynch 2006, p. 10). But Georgia matters also because of its importance as a transit route for energy goods from the Caspian Sea Region. Notwithstanding the use of an increasing number of instruments to promote conflict settlement in the South Caucasus[12], EU involvement in the region and in Georgia in the period before the 2008 conflict with Russia has been judged as not specifically targeted to the resolution of the unresolved conflicts of the region/country. As pointed out by the Report published by the Independent International Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (the so-called Tagliavini Report)[13] "over the years there was a gradual increase in European involvement in Georgia, which may be called forthcoming in terms of economic

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[12]Among these instruments is he appointment in July 2003 of the EU Special Representative to the South Caucasus, tasked with developing contacts with local actors, encouraging regional cooperation, and assisting in conflict resolution. Since 2006 the mandate was expanded so as to contribute to regional conflict resolution. Also in the year 2004-2005 the EU launched its first civilian Rule of Law mission (EUJUST-THEMIS)   at the requests of the new Saakashvili government and after the EU's decision not to take over the OSCE border monitoring mission on the Georgian-Chech See Stewart (2007).
[13]Available at http://www.ceiig.ch/Report.html .

aid, politically friendly on the bilateral side, cooperative but cautious on contentious political issues and ….mostly distanced [from] sensitive security issues. A good case in point was the European reluctance to take over the Border Monitoring Mission on the Caucasus range facing Russia, after Russia had vetoed the hitherto OSCE engagement in 2004." This "carefully calibrated phrase", that Popescu sees as describing the whole story of EU failure to engage in conflict-resolution and a missed opportunity for preventing the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia[14], makes reference to the request advanced by Georgia for the EU to assume responsibility for the international monitoring of the Georgia-Russian border, after that in late 2004 Russia vetoed the extension of the mandate of the OSCE border monitoring mission, to which the EU responded with the engagement of 3 persons (later increased to twelve) as part of a so-called EU Special Representative's Border Support Team[15]. According to the latest Council Decision (2010/109/CFSP of 22 February 2010), the EUSR for the South Caucasus through a support team provides the Union with reporting and a continued assessment of the border situation and facilitates confidence-building between Georgia and the Russian Federation, thereby ensuring efficient cooperation and liaison with all relevant actors. The role played by the team is however very much affected by the limited number of personnel and the exclusion of operational field activities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, especially in the role played on the ground as tool for confidence building and assessment of border-related issues. Having its headquarters in Tbilisi, the Team is more suited to have a stronger role in the assistance to Georgian Border Police and other relevant government institutions in the implementation of the comprehensive integrated border management strategy and to work with the Georgian authorities to increase communication between Tbilisi and the border.

 EUMM Georgia

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14 The same concept is expressed by Keohane in the 26 September 2008 Report on the EUISS seminar "Strengthening ESDP: The EU approach to international security" of 18-19 September 2008.

15Popescu N., The EU's conflict prevention failure in Georgia, published on Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst (http://www.cacianalyst.org). The EUSR Border Support Team in Georgia was established by the Council Joint Action 2005/582/CFSP of 28 July 2005 .
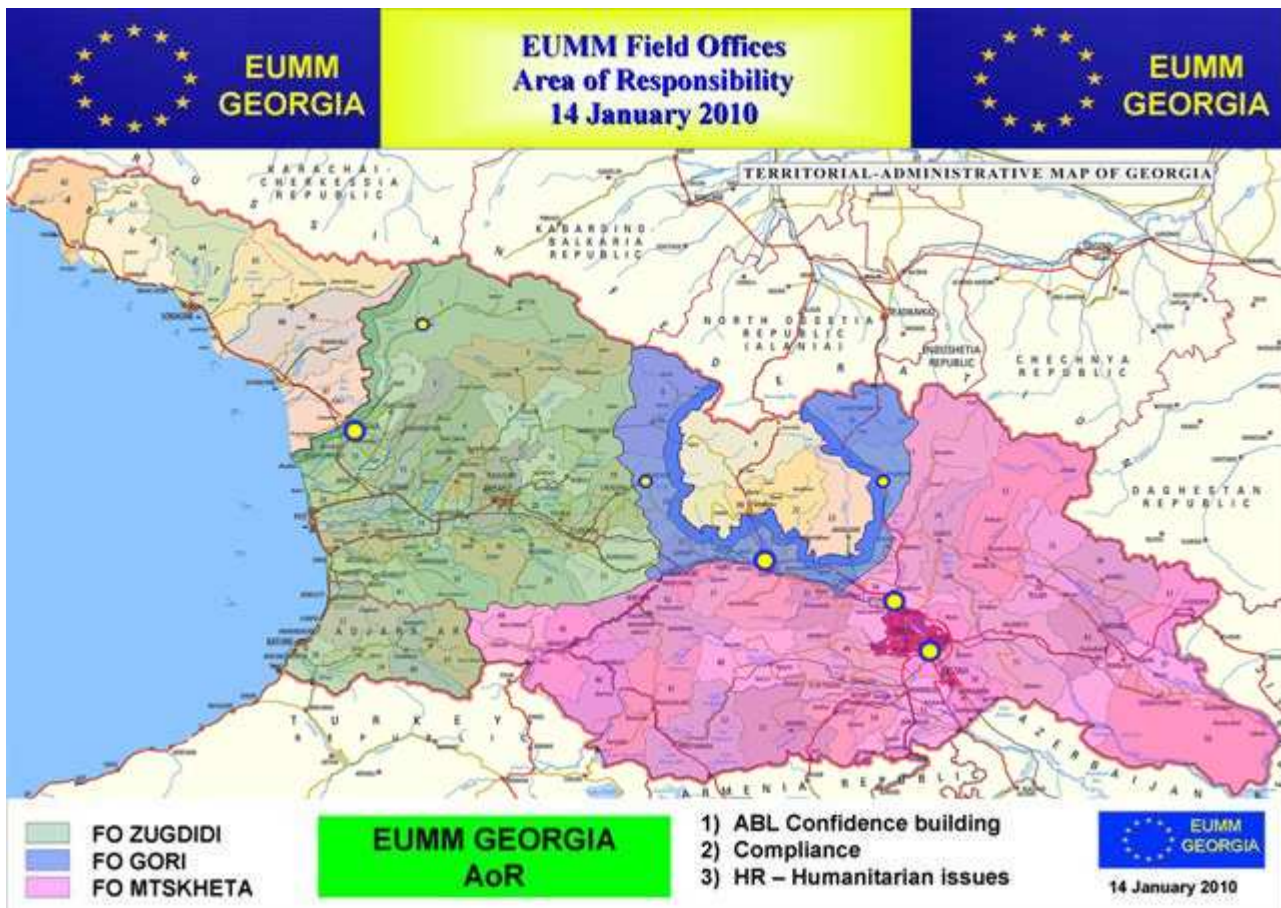
Tab 1 – EUMM Georgia Area of Responsibility (Source: http://www.eumm.eu/)

What up to 2008 was a "frozen conflict" between Georgia, South Ossetia and Russia stretches back to the early 1990s, when South Ossetia and another separatist region, Abkhazia, gained *de facto* independence from Georgia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Whereas the region settled into a tenuous peace monitored by Russian peacekeepers up to 2004, frictions between South Ossetia, backed by Russia, and Georgia increased sharply after the election of Saakashvili, whose declared programme was the restoration of national (Georgian) integrity. On 7 August, 2008, fighting in Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia eventually escalated into war between Georgia and Russia. Following mediation by French president Sarkozy, a ceasefire agreement was reached on 12 August, and signed by Russia and Georgia on 15-16 August. The Six-point

Agreement[16] called for an immediate end to all use of force, and for both sides to pull back its armies to their pre-war positions. Both the EU and the US strongly criticized Russia's "disproportionate" response; President Medvedev announced Russia's formal recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on 26 August[17].

The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia was established following the outbreak of violence with the mandate of monitoring the implementation of the Six-point Agreement, in which the two parties committed not to resort to force, to end hostilities, and to provide free access to humanitarian aid. The EU activated the procedure for establishing an ESDP mission by first deciding on September 15 the immediate dispatch of a fact finding mission, setting up a Crisis Management Coordination Team and preparing a Concept of Operations so that a monitoring mission of over 200 personnel was deployed as early as October 1. The mission's objectives, as outlined in the Council Joint Action of 15 September 2008, are first "to contribute to long-term stability through Georgia and the surrounding region" and "in the short-term, to the stabilisation of the situation with a reduced risk of a resumption of hostilities, in full compliance with the six-point Agreement and the subsequent implementation measures"[18].

EUMM's activities for the achievement of these objectives are organised around four main tasks: a) stabilisation – the mission is tasked to monitor, analyse and report on the situation of the stabilistaion process, the implementation of the six-point agreement, violation of human rights and international humanitarian law; b) normalisation – the mission is asked to monitor, analyse and report on the normalisation of civil governance in the conflict region (rule of law, law enforcement structures, public order); c) confidence building – the mission should contribute to the reduction of tensions by facilitating contacts between parties; d) information – the mission has the task of providing

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16 The six-point ceasefire agreement, RFI on RFI website, 16th August 2008, and in French on the Georgian State Ministry for Reintegration, available at http://www.smr.gov.ge/uploads/file/Six_Point_Peace_Plan.pdf .

17 International Crisis Group, War in Georgia, available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/key-issues/war-in-georgia.aspx
18Council Joint Action 2008/736/CFSP of 15 September 2008 on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, EUMM, Georgia, OJEU, 17 September 2008, L248/27.

information on the situation on the ground to Brussels, so as to support EU decision-making.

Both in its stabilisation and normalisation tasks, the EUMM monitors movements of military and police forces as well as equipment and vehicles on the Georgian side of the administrative borders and in the near areas. Monitoring, however, does not limit to security aspects in the narrow sense, but relates also to observing and reporting about the rule of law, human rights and humanitarian situation of the population. The stabilisation and normalisation of the situation in the conflict zones is pursued also through EUMM direct interaction with the Georgian government. By signing Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence the EUMM has both gained access to a flow of information on development and incidents in the conflict zones and the right to conduct inspection of facilities and sites of the Georgian armed forces. In particular, the MoU signed with the Ministry of the Interior foresees the "establishment of a cooperation mechanism between law enforcement agencies on both sides of the administrative borders" (Fisher 2009). Such a provision has been used in February 2009 to include an Incident Prevention and Response mechanism (IPRM) within the framework of the Geneva talks that provides for meeting between the concerned parties' authorities to discuss and solve issue threatening the security and stability in the region.

After the first year of its presence[19] the EUMM's performance has been mainly assessed against the fulfillment of its most prominent task of monitoring the withdrawal of Russia's troops from undisputed Georgian territory and the interaction with local and national government structures that helped to restore civil governance. On this fronts, although certain non-compliances to the six-Point agreements remains, such as the uncompleted withdrawal of Russian troops[20], the mission is seen as having delivered on post-war stabilisation process. However, certain characteristics of the Mission itself are such to

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[19] Originally established for one year, the Mission's mandate has been extended until 14 September 2010. The European presence comprises approximately 330 staff, including personnel of Headquarters and field offices, around 250 out of it are monitors.

[20] See the ICG Report "War in Georgia", available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/key-issues/war-in-georgia.aspx .

prevent the full implementation of the normalisation ad stabilisation tasks. One above all is the fact that the mission's activities are limited to the Georgian side of the conflict areas. Despite the fact that the mandate of the mission is Georgia-wide, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia, however mission Headquarters have been established in Tbilisi and regional offices in Mtsketa, Gori, and Zugdidi, that is Georgia non-disputed areas only. The lack of functioning relations with all parties to conflict, that results in the impossibility for the Mission to have access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, strongly affect the extent to which EUMM can actually deliver on its confidence-building task.

Exactly with the purpose of better addressing the situation on the ground, the mission's Field Office structure has been strengthened in September 2009. EUMM patrols have been divided into teams that focus on specific operational requirements: Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) and confidence building – teams work on the Boundary Lines near South-Ossetia and Abkhazia, dealing primarily with conflict related issues, and encouraging cooperation between the sides; compliance – teams monitor military and law enforcement facilities, ensuring that they are complying with the Memoranda of understanding that exist between the EUMM and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Defence respectively; humanitarian and human Rights – teams primarily focus on humanitarian issues involving individuals displaced by the conflict and Human Rights. The patrols report daily on a wide range of issues - grievances of the local population, problems with the winter approaching, gender and human rights issues, on the security situation and the presence of military and police forces in the area – and are the more tangible and immediate sign of the EU interest in the resolution of the conflict.

However, the impossibility to implement its mandate in the separatist regions is preventing the mission to effectively work as confidence builder and more specifically to conduct any form of investigation of the Georgian claims of ethnic cleansing in South Ossetia. The recent reports of incidents in the Gali district – exactly an area to which the EUMM has no direct access - which have resulted in the deaths of three local officials, injuries to others, various detentions and homes being set on fire, confirm the worries about the solidity of the normalisation process. Although the EUMM has often called for

the use of the IPRM and participate into linked investigation, however the viability of this same mechanism is uncertain as both Georgia and breakaway regions accuse each other of manipulating the IPMR through falsification of facts and wrongful accusation of abuse of the ceasefire agreement[21] .

Assessing the EUMM performance and the relevance for the solution of the conflict around borders

The presence on the ground of the EUMM is too short to allow for a thorough assessment of its contribution to the resolution of the conflict in Georgia, which seems in any case far from occurring. However, it may be said that time is perhaps the element that less has affected considerations on EUMM performance, as the main challenges the Mission has to face are strongly connected with the issue of the EU engagement with Russia and the connected issue of the kind of actor the EU want to be in conflict resolution for its neighbours.

As said by Fisher "the mission needs to strike a difficult balance in is relations with the parties to the conflict" that are two important partner countries of the EU. On the one hand what the Mission is able to achieve is very much related to how the mission and the EU are perceived by the parties. "From Tbilisi's perspective, Russia's dominant role in the peacekeeping mechanisms addressing the conflicts in the entities and Moscow's strong impact on OSCE and UN-led conflict resolution processes were clearly against Georgian interests. Closer cooperation with the EU and the Union's deeper involvement in conflict resolution were seen in Tbilisi as a tool to reduce Russian influence and gain more control via Member States with whom Georgia holds close relations". As for the relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, these have been very tense since the outset of the Mission. (Fisher 2009, p.388). While before the 2008 war the Abkhaz leadership had repeatedly expressed interests in closer relations with the EU, after the war and these positions have radically changed and the EUMM came to be perceived as being the materialization of the West's pro-Georgian policy. Difficult relationship with the two separatists regions are a

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[21] See ISIS Europe, European Security Review no. 48, February 2010.

mirror image of the relations with Russia, which have been raising and still raise more serious concerns. As put by Popescu[22], "not irritating Russia is not a policy" and ignoring conflicts in order to avoid irritation should not be a political option. On the contrary the EU is requested to "do what it takes to contribute to stability in the neighbourhood, hence creating the basis for good relations with Russia and the Eastern partnership states as well". But the EU has been quite timid in responding to Russia's non-compliance with the ceasefire documents and Moscow's recent choices of hardening its military presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia[23] . The EU may have opted for a diplomatic and acceptable approach to the very issue of resolving conflicts in EU-Russia common neighbourhood with the recent signature of a memorandum on a joint EU-Russia Committee on Security and Foreign Policy (ERPSC) on June 5, 2010. The document proposes to "explore" the creation of a ministerial-level committee to work as a forum for the European Union and Russia to exchange views on issues of international security and foreign policy; to "establish ground rules for joint EU-Russia civil/military crisis management operations"; and to "exchange views and draft recommendations … on specific issues"[24] . However it is already questioned whether such a committee – with a too slow, bureaucratic and at-27 Europe on the one hand and a Russian power politics on the other hand - would be able to resolve specific security issues with Russia on Eastern neighborhood, or even discuss European and Russian foreign policies straightforwardly.

Within this context, what is the role played by the CSDP Monitoring Mission in Georgia? The scarcity of analysis on the missions' results and contribution to the normalisation and stabilisation in the South Caucasus gives a significant indication *per se*. Are there specific benefits for the resolution of conflict in Georgia stemming from the EUMM being in place?

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[22] Popescu N., EU's Failure in Georgia, available at http://blogs.euobserver.com/popescu/2009/10/04/eus-failure-in-georgia/ .

[23] Moscow pulled its troops back from Georgia proper by 15th October 2008 – but it has failed to comply with the provision that forces would have to withdraw to positions held prior to the conflict. Far higher numbers of Russian troops, and now also border guards, remain in Abkhazia and South Ossetia than had been the case prior to the conflict. Moscow has now signed military cooperation agreements with the regions it considers independent and has been beefing up its military presence in both regions. See Magdalena Frichova Grono (2010, p.13).

24 Inayeh A., "Joint EU-Russian crisis management in Europe? Interesting idea…" available at http://politicom.moldova.org/news/joint-eurussian-crisis-management-in-europe-interesting-idea-209996-eng.html

Would it be too reductive to say that in this case being on the ground is important *per se* and that the mission is embedded in a too complex web of political sensitivities to make the difference in the conflict? As at this stage commentators see "European interest in the conflicts in its Eastern neighborhood … to be on the wane"[25], the answer could be a positive one. As clearly states by ISIS Europe in February, , "[i]t is important to underline that the mission can only contribute minimally to the long term stabilisation in Georgia. For that, one has to look at the Geneva talks and their development, and as far as the negotiations are concerned, there have been very few positive developments. This in turn raises the question of the resolution of the conflict and also on the exit-strategy of the EU mission"[26]. In fact the investigation conducted so far on both the EU approach to conflicts in its Eastern neighbourhood and EUMM in Georgia has revealed that management of troubled borders is to be put into the context of this very specific crisis, with its implications for the broader EU foreign relations with the very awkward partner Russia. Not being a Border Assistance Mission, the EUMM Georgia is addressing border issues as part of its confidence building role in the region. However, constraints imposed to the complete fulfilment of the mission mandate compromise the overall solidity of the mission itself and significantly affect the border management dialogue and cooperation issue. EU border missions are said to be important for making EU neighbourhood a better place. Mission like the EUMM Georgia could be the forerunner of such missions in the region; one that prepare the a stabilised and normalised ground for establishing fruitful cooperation on border-related issues.

EUBAM

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[25] Inayeh A., "Joint EU-Russian crisis management in Europe? Interesting idea…" The recent proposal by Catherine Ashton's office to abolish the posts of special EU envoys for the Southern Caucasus and Moldova while maintaining similar positions for more distant regions: Sudan, the Great Lakes region in Africa, and Central Asia One is reported as a sign of this approach.

[26] Herz J., Gya G., CSDP and EU mission Update – February 2010, in European Security Review no. 48, ISIS Europe, February 2010.
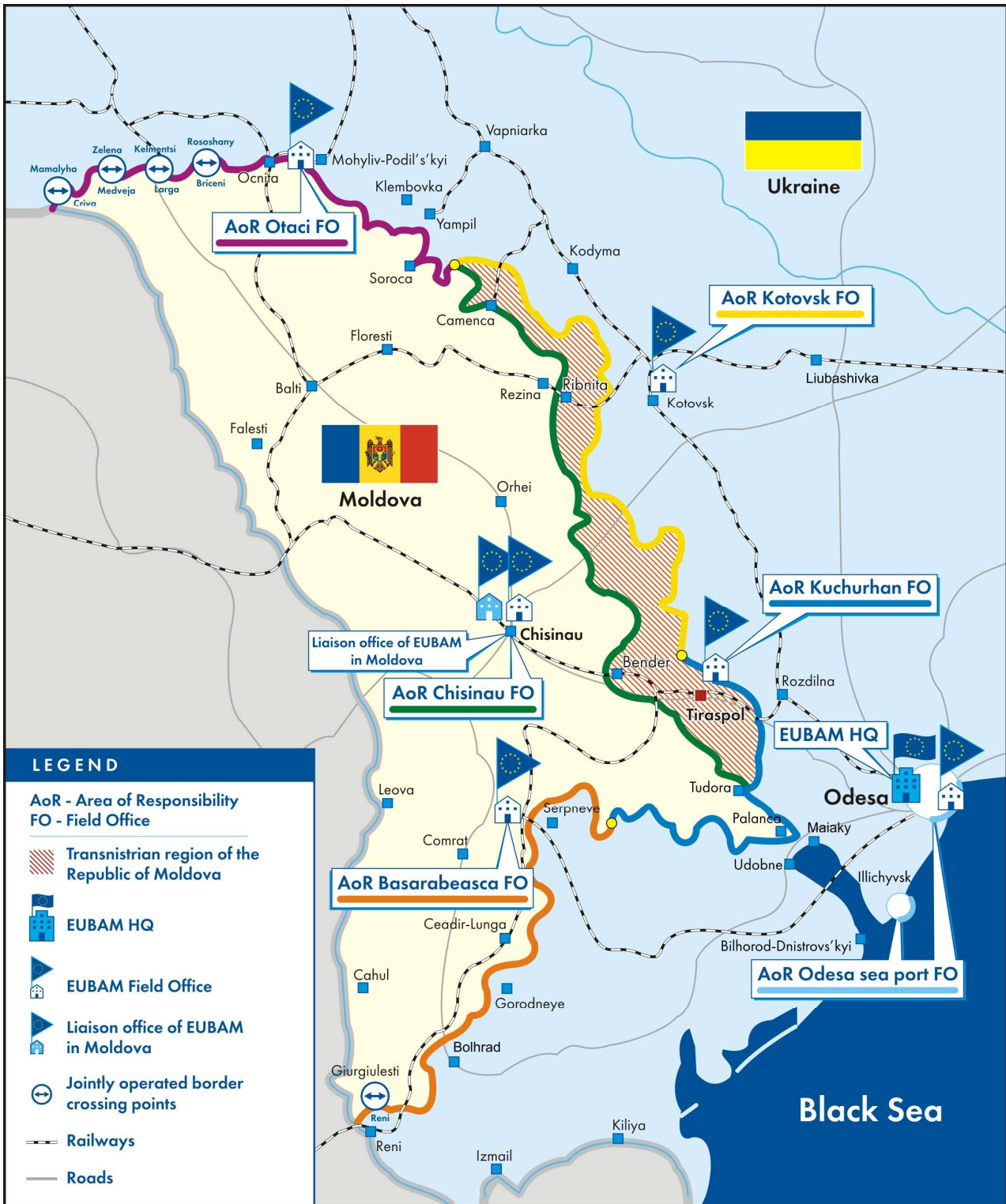
Tab 2 - EUBAM's Area of Responsibility (Source: http://www.eubam.org/)

Conflict resolution-process in Transdniestria and the European role

The EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) started in November 2005 in order to provide assistance for the management of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. The final purpose of the European intervention is to reach a peaceful settlement in the region. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the frozen conflict over the territory of Transdniestria has posed a never ending threat to the European stability in the eastern neighbourhood. The Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic (or *Pridnestrovskaia Moldavskaia Respublika - PMR*) is an informal state since 1992. Indeed PMR is still seeking international recognition: such attempt is strongly opposed by Moldova that aims at restoring its territorial integrity (Isachenko, 2010). While Russia has conceived the open support to Tiraspol as a diplomatic way to affirm its influence over the region (Sushko, 2006), the Chisinau government has widely stressed the perils derived from the existence of a "black hole" for arms and human trafficking and drug smuggling (Herd, 2005). The European Union was obviously concerned about the existence of a contested territory near its border that would have led to violence and conflicts. Moreover the EU conceived a possible safe heaven for traffickers and criminal gangs at its boundaries as a direct menace for the whole European security (Sushko, 2006). In addition, a quasi-state such Transdniestria without efficient controls at the frontier would have easily fostered illegal border crossings and migration toward western European states.

In a sense, the Tiraspol's regime seemed to be advantaged by the special condition derived by its controversial international status. According to the International Crisis Group (2006) the financial conditions of Transdniestrian Customs weree healthier than the budget of the state. Therefore, form the EU perspective, the necessary premise for contrasting effectively such threats was the active involvement in the conflict-resolution process in Transdniestria. However, the Russian support as well as the domestic scenario in Tiraspol made the international intervention problematic[27]. Nevertheless, after Romania became an

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[27] The political and economic scenario in Transdniestria is ruled by the overwhelming presence of the President Smirnov and his family who is the leader of the founded Patriotic Party of Transdniestria as well as the chairman of the Transdniestrian branch of Gazprombank. According to Isachenko: "*Tellingly, for people living in Transdniestria, the official name of their self-proclaimed state PMR does not stand for Pridnestrovskaia Moldavskaia Respublika but rather for Papina i moia Respublika (Papa's and My Republic), an expression coined in reference to the state's appropriation by Smirnov's family*" (2010, pp. 18-19).

EU member, Brussels increased its involvement in the region (Sushko, 2006; Isachenko, 2010). In fact, the European Council appointed the EU special representative for Moldova in March 2005, the European Union became an observer in the negotiations on Transdniestria, the EU Commission delegation was opened in Chisinau in October and one month later, the EUBAM was launched on the ground deploying EU customs and border guards experts and local personnel.

Such strategic focus on border security stems from the nature of the challenged posed by the Transdniestrian conflict: organised crime, corruption, proliferation of weapons, customs fraud, smuggling and trafficking (Michael and Bowser 2009; Baracani 2002; Sushko, 2006).

Moldova, which directly borders on the EU, was not able to control the state frontier with Ukraine due to the presence of the Transdniestrian territory (See Tab. 1). In addition, the relationship between Chisinau and Kiev have been uncooperative for years on this issue. For instance Ukraine[28] was initially contrary to custom stamps for accepting goods from Transdniestria. The mission aimed at improving the cooperation among all the actors in order to reduce contraband and criminal activities. Therefore, fostering collaboration along the borders was viewed as a strategic instrument for enhancing stronger partnerships and creating the preconditions for a political solution of the frozen conflict (Isachenko, 2010).

The EUBAM's purposes were to provide detailed information on what really happened at the Transdniestrian frontier, contrasting the illegal activities, improving the capabilities of local authorities as well as their cooperation and to pose a political and economic pressure over the Tiraspol's regime. All these efforts would have theoretically contribute to enhance stability in the neighbourhood, defending the European security from external threats.

The analysis of the main features of the operation could shed light on European approach and its results.

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[28] The Yushchenko's election in 2005 has undoubtedly affected the level of cooperation with Moldova, altered the Ukraine's approach on the issue.

EUBAM: aims, tools and problems.

After the joint request of the Presidents of the Republic Moldova and Ukraine the EUBAM deployed its staff on the ground in November 2005[29]. The mission, which does not operate in the Transdniestrian territory, has no executive powers, giving only recommendations to Moldova and Ukraine in the field of border management. "EUBAM was designed by the EU in line with recommendations of the joint Council-Commission Fact-Finding Mission of August 2005, and in line with the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the European Commission and Moldova and Ukraine on 7 October 2005"[30].

UNDP offers its logistical support to EUBAM whose mandate will expire in November 2011[31]. The mission's official aims are "to work with Moldova and Ukraine to harmonise their border management standards and procedures with those prevalent in EU member states; to help enhance the professional capacities of the Moldovan and Ukrainian customs and border guard services at operational level; to improve co-operation and complementarity between the border guard and customs services and with other law enforcement agencies"[32]. The EUBAM's main goal is to contribute to the "delivery of good quality border and customs services to the citizens and companies of Moldova and Ukraine to facilitate contacts and trade"[33]. In order to reach these objectives the mission deeply focuses on training and technical assistance for customs controls and border surveillance. EUBAM experts train on-the-job the local personnel in wide range of tasks, from night patrols to the examine of documents and vehicles discovering frauds. The other main duty of the European operation is to patrol the border and observe how the customs and border guards work at the checkpoints[34] after the training (Isachenko, 2010). These tasks are particularly complex due to the geographical extension of the territory to

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[29] Currently (June 2010) more than 200 staff members are working at the Moldovan-Ukrainian borders. The half of them are local staff. 19 EU member states deploy their soldiers in EUBAM. The Mission has its headquarters in Odessa (Ukraine).

[30] : <http://www.eubam.org/>. All the data on the mission are available at the official website.

[31] The Mission's mandate was already extended in 2007 and 2009

[32] : <http://www.eubam.org/>

[33] *ibidem*

[34] "There are 67 permanent official border crossing points including international, inter-state and local ones"(<http://www.eubam.org/>)

monitor (1,222 km long) and, above all, the existence of the "internal boundary"[35] between the Transnistrian region and the other areas of Moldova. The European Commission funds EUBAM under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument[36] in order to compel all its duties. According to Isachenko (2010) the scarce resources and doubts over the cooperation of local agencies fostered the initial uncertainty over the mission. Such perplexity, which was widely overwhelmed, was alimented by the considerable problems that EUBAM would have faced. The level of cross-border cooperation was extremely low and the corruption was broadly spread. In addition the eventual EUBAM's recommendations would have been refused by Moldovan and Ukrainian due to the lack of executive power of the operation. Evidently the collaboration among the actors were conceived as the necessary premise for an effective action on the ground. Indeed, the creation of the Investigation Advisory Unit (2007) was aimed at encouraging the inter-agency coordination. However the massive change occurred when Ukraine accept to adopt new customs regulations that allowed Kiev to import goods from Transdniestria only with documents checked by Moldovan customs offices (Ranieri, 2005). A Joint Declaration (JD) on implementation of the customs regime on common border was signed at the end of 2005 by Moldova and Ukraine. The EU's purpose was to improve cross border cooperation and transparency[37].

According to the Summary of the key recommendations in EUBAM Needs Assessment and Recommendation Report (2006): "(…) It is clear that much of the smuggling across the border is undertaken by organised criminal groups using a sophisticated *modus operandi*. These groups make use of the territory of "TN" [Transdniestria] to smuggle goods back out to Ukraine and also into the Moldovan domestic market. It appears that the "TN" authorities are either unwilling or unable to take effective action to counter this".

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[35] <http://www.eubam.org/>

[36] The budget for the Mission for December 2009 to November 2010 is EUR 12 million. Moreover the EU member states provide additional contributions.

[37] "Since March 2007 EUBAM has been working closely with the Moldovan and Ukrainian customs authorities to ensure the smooth, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Moldovan Government regulations on import/export activities, which allow companies in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova with temporary registration to obtain the same access to trade preferences that was previously only enjoyed by companies with permanent registration".(<http://www.eubam.org/>).

Therefore, although the initial efforts in promoting region al cooperation by the EUBAM, the organized crime still took advantage of the existence of a Transdniestria " black hole". Initial Assessment Report well illustrated how the smuggling across the Moldova-Ukraine border was undertaken by traffickers and criminal groups that worked through the territory of Transdniestria (Sushko, 2006). Therefore, the tasks for the European mission was extremely difficult due to the avoidance of a direct intervention in the Transdniestrian territory. Despite such constraints, has the EUBAM succeeded in its goals, improving border control management in last years?

EUBAM border control activities: preliminary results

Sushko (2006) considers EUBAM an illustrative example of the EU policy aim to share the lessons learnt in the field of border and custom control to the neighbours[38]. According to this view, Ukraine and Moldova will improve their capabilities acquiring the positive experience of the EU members states in border control activities and adopting the European standards. Sushko, who believes that enhanced capabilities in monitoring frontiers could contribute to a solution of the Transdniestrian conflict, stresses the positive influence of EUMAM towards regional security. For instance the new Ukraine-Moldova customs regime, which was introduced after the EU's pressure, is considered an effective tool for obtaining more transparency about import and exports flows to and from Transdniestria. Indeed the trade across the border for Transdniestrians is allowed only after am official registration in Chisinau. The EU considers the implementation of the Joint Declaration that introduced in December 2005 the new customs regime as the most important achievement of the EUBAM. A growing number of Transdniestrian companies (almost 600 at the end of the 2009 according to EUBAM Annual Report) have been effectively registered with the Moldovan authorities in order to obtain the status of a regular Moldovan economic operator, accessing to EU trade preferences. The Ukraine's introduction new border and trade regulations with Transdniestria in 2006 led to a strong

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[38] "The mission is neither a distinct ESDP mission (although the EU Council exercises political oversight), nor is it an exclusively EC-managed operation (due to the participation of EU Member States)" (Grevi, Helly and Keohane, 2009, p.282).

confrontation with Tiraspol and also Moscow that considered the new custom procedure as a blockade (Socor, 2006). These reactions emphasize the relevance of the policies adopted by Moldova and Ukraine and supported by the EUBAM in the field. The mission aimed at decreasing illegal revenues from trade at the borders and, consequently, making Tiraspol more cooperative in the resolution of conflict. According to Grevi, Helly and Keohane: "Evidence of such evolution remains weak, but those Transnistrian companies which have registered are exporting legally to the EU and to the rest of the world" (2009, p.283).

Assessing the results of EUBAM we should carefully take in consideration that the mandate of the operation did not provide a direct involvement in fighting illegal cross-border actives. The EUBAM is limited to assistance, advising and training. The control of the border, as well as the authority of discovering weapons or drugs smugglers, is in the hand of Moldova and Ukraine. Officially EUBAM declares to be "not aware of any significant arms find since the operation of the Mission"[39]. Indeed no substantial seizure of weapons occurred in first years[40]. Also the then-chief of the EUBAM, Major General Ferencz Banfi, highlighted in 2009 that smugglers were reluctant to trade in weapons and ammunition in the region[41]. According to him the EU presence led traffickers to less dangerous goods as cigarettes, alcohol, car, and food, especially chicken. However the 2009 Annual Report underlines that: "Hunting guns were the main types of weapons seized at BCPs [border crossing points] and on the 'green' border. Seizures of weapons illegally transported across the border saw a 40 percent increase over the year, yet there is no evidence of organized trafficking" (2009, p, 22). This data reveals that smugglers have not halted their activities in the field because of the EU mission.

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[39] *Ibidem*.

[40] Due to this fact, Grevi, Helly and Keohane (2009) consider the initial concerns related to weapons' trafficking excessive.

[41] See **"EU Says Smuggling Less Of A Problem In Transdniester"**, Radio Free Europe, August 08, 2009, available   at:
<http://www.rferl.org/content/EU_Mission_Says_Transdniester_Smuggling_On_The_Rise/1795496.html>

Undoubtedly the EUBAM contributed to large-scale meat-smuggling and the dismantling of human trafficking networks (Grevi, Helly and Keohane, 2009). According to the EUBAM Annual Report: "border violations continued, including local residents illegally crossing the border. Cases of organized goods smuggling were observed, particularly regarding the 'Transnistrian' sector. The main goods detected were cigarettes, meat and alcohol (2009, p.9)[42].

Drug trafficking remains a problem in the region as illustrated by several seizures of drugs in Odessa Commercial Sea Port: the route starts from Afghanistan and it uses the Harbour in Ukraine, transiting Moldova to the EU (EUBAM assessment 2008). As stressed by the Annual Report: "Approximately 42kg of drugs were seized by the border services of both countries on the common border throughout the year. The main substances seized were cocaine, heroin and marijuana. This marked an overall increase by over 50 percent compared to the previous year" (2009, p.21).

Therefore the 2009 Annual Report emphasized of ongoing seizures of weapons, drugs and other good, revealing the persistency of smugglers (especially in the Transdniestria area) as well as the evidence of an enhanced local capabilities in border control. Indeed, the main outcomes of the operations were: an increased surveillance at the frontiers, a more efficient control at the borders with brand new software and hardware that reduce timing of procedures rising the quality of the monitoring, a structured training programme aims at building up the capacities of hundreds of local officers on border management, harmonizing theirs skills to the EU standards. EUBAM fostered cooperation between Moldavian and Ukrainian agencies[43] and information exchange through specific

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[42] According to the Annual Report: "The number of prevented attempts to smuggle goods increased by approximately eight percent whilst the value of goods seized decreased by 40 percent against the previous year. Sectors North and Centre of the 'green' border were reported to have been the most risky with regard to smuggling goods such as cigarettes, meat and alcohol" (2009, p.22).
[43] See the several joint border control operations. Specific Working Groups have been created (mainly on illegal migration and weapons).

protocols[44], developed risk analysis structures and stepped up cooperation with FRONTEX and other international partners[45].

According to Grevi, Helly and Keohane: "The lack of executive powers has been compensated by a quite wide array of advisory powers which have allowed the EUBAM to be very effective on the ground (2009, p.284). Certainly the progresses made in the field of border management have been considerable in last years. A better cooperation between Moldova and Ukraine is the first evident results reached by the EUBAM. The Joijnt declaration is the best proof of the renewed collaboration along the border. Such output derived from an approach that wasn't' limited to sending guards or police at the frontiers. The EU conceived the missions as tool for protecting European security, engaging in a constructive way decided to provide a comprehensive assistance for the eastern neighbours guarantying training, advising and lessons learnt (Isachenko, 2010).

The mission succeeded in fostering detailed information about what really happen near a "black hole" as Transdniestria. Surely smugglers and traffickers have faced a new significant obstacle in their activities. However, EUBAM is an technical assistance project. Without a stronger and comprehensive diplomatic approach the resolution of the frozen conflict is still unrealistic. Obviously the operation has promoted international cooperation, reducing the opportunities for criminals and traffickers, and, consequently it has reduced the possible roots of instability. As correctly pointed out by Grevi, Helly and Keohane: "The Transnistrian regime, while having lost some of its illegal revenue, does not seem more willing to engage in negotiations with Moldova on the resolution of the conflict. Instead, it seems to rely more heavily on Russia's generosity in the form of loans, investments, gas supplies and 'humanitarian assistance'. The EUBAM's deployment has actually coincided with an indefinite pause in the conflict negotiation talks" (2009, p.285). Moreover, according to Isachenko (2010), the new custom regime introduced by Moldova

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[44] For instance, see the introduction of the Pre-arrival Information Exchange System (PAIES) against custom frauds.

[45] "In April EUBAM and the World Customs Organisation signed a joint statement of intent to establish regular cooperation, with a view to facilitating and supporting the capacity building working programmes in relation to the Moldovan and Ukrainian Customs Services" (EUBAM Annual Report 2009, p. 11)

and Ukraine has been perceived in Tiraspol has a blockade, reinforcing paradoxically the regime that has efficiently spread the idea of an external economic and political assault.

The EUBAM is crucial test of its European Neighborhood Policy: bringing security on the eastern frontier is a decisive interest for the EU's foreign policy. The operations has been certainty helpful in promoting the European approach on border management in the neighborhood, sharing standards and best practices. At the same, time, the way though which EUBAM has acted shows the effectiveness of a comprehensive strategy based on joint actions, technical assistance and training: border control monitoring is reinforced (despite the threats are still present) and the local cooperation is enhanced. However, all these efforts have not been sufficient to foster a peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict that remains "frozen" and far for a shared solution.

Conclusion: a "prudent" security provider in the neighbourhood?

> "*Border problems in the newly independent states in the east of Europe are an integral component of the incomplete state and institution building of those states, and reflect the whole spectrum of key regional problems such as corruption, poverty, frozen conflicts, and the lack of infrastructure, of good political practices and of good governance*"
> (Sushko, 2006, p.10)

Borders reveal their strategic importance also in the post Cold War era. International Security Studies focus on "traditional" armed conflicts along the boundaries and new threats as organized crime, terrorism, illegal migration, smuggling of weapons and drugs that take advantage of permeable borders.

Nation states and regional organization as the EU have increasingly deployed civil and military missions aiming at resolving conflicts about and around borders. Through the analysis of two selected case studies, this probe has stressed the role played by CSDP missions in providing security and stability at the EU periphery. The operations EUMM – Georgia and EUBAM –Moldova/Ukraine intervene along the boundaries aiming at fostering a peaceful settlement of frozen or unresolved conflicts.

Apparently, the engagement in its neighbourhood seems to portray the EU as a security provider. Far from the wait-and-see policy of the beginning of the nineties, the European strategic interest is to promote stability along its external borders through the CSDP operations.

However, a detailed analysis of the context of the interventions as well as the approach followed by the EU on the ground highlights a varied picture. Certainly the framework illustrated by this probe is preliminary as for the results achieved by both the EUMM and the EUBAM, especially in the light of the limited duration of their activities so far. Nevertheless it is worth noticing some key aspects of the European approach in the field.

Undoubtedly, the operations are important tools for supporting and complementing the EU policies in the neighborhood. Indeed their presence provides information on the ongoing frozen conflicts, thus helping to prevent military escalation and contrasting new threats to the European security, also by spreading EU standards and procedures. The seizures revealed by the EUBAM Annual Report well illustrate the lively menace posed by organized crime and traffickers along permeable boundaries. In fact the specific focus on border security stems from the risks derived from the existence of a "black hole" in the eastern European frontier.

Vey much of the type of attention CSDP missions deserve to borders depends on the nature of threats that come from those boundaries. In the case of Georgia, the aim of the operation is the stabilization of the region after the eruption of the armed conflict in 2008. Therefore borders and issues around them are addressed for reaching the main strategic objective of the EUMM: operating as confidence building tool for restoring normalcy and cooperation between the parties. Conflict is around border in a more traditional sense: the military one in a post conflict context. As occurred in the Balkans, the unresolved and escalated conflict in South Ossetia was a missed opportunity for the European. Failure in addressing the volatile situation on the Georgian borders may represent another "expectation-capability gap". In addition, the limited mandate of the EUMM and the low profile approach (especially towards Russia) has not encouraged an enhanced confidence building. Thus the possible contribution to a conflict resolution is far to be effective.

On the contrary, EUBAM has fostered a better collaboration between Moldova and Ukraine on the Transnistrian issue through joint action and mechanism along the borders. Moreover, despite the persistent threat posed by smuggling and trafficking, the results obtained in border control management are quite positive. However, also is this case, the approach based on technical assistance and training seems not be adequate for reaching a peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. Indeed, as occurred in EUMM, neither south Ossetia nor Transdnistria have been actively involved at political and operative level.

Different threat perceptions and diverse strategic relevance of the issue at the stake by Russia and the EU seem crucial to understand the policy followed by the actors in their neighbourhood: a very prudent standing in the Caucasus and a cooperative engagement in Moldova and Ukraine aimed at contrasting the new threats for its security, even if incomplete because of the lack of direct political involvement of Transdniestria in conflict settlement.

Without an overall and ambitious conflict resolution approach, CSDP missions along the boundaries can reach only partial and limited results. Consequently the EU appears to be just a "prudent" security provider in its neighbourhood.

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