

**T.C.
MARMARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ ENSTİTÜSÜ**

AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ SİYASETİ VE ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI

**THE EU'S CONFLICT RESOLUTION EFFORTS IN ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD: THE
CASE OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS**

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

A. Nesli YENER

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ONAY SAYFASI

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ABSTRACT

The end of the Cold War has introduced new dynamics and new interpretations for the old concepts in the international relations. The security perception which has been re-conceptualized and broadened with the inclusion of soft dimensions, i.e human security, has affected the EU's policies and actions related to its foreign policy preferences and implications. The formerly suppressed or covered intra-state ethnic conflicts have been released with the fading effect of the Cold War bipolar structure, and the increased number of these conflicts has brought wider negative consequences over the international actors. The rise of interconnectedness around the globe has dragged nations into a more vulnerable environment where any possible threat might become a source of instability and devastation. Therefore, the EU felt the necessity to engage further in peaceful resolution of the violent conflicts around its vicinity which has crucial reflections over global security as well as the EU's own security and stability. The EU's international role, as a security actor, has long been discussed along with the EU's efficiency, capability and its contributions in peaceful resolution of the deep-rooted conflicts. The instability and threats in the South Caucasus region became a primary matter of concern for the EU's own security and prosperity. In this context, the EU's involvement and its impact in the three long-standing South Caucasian conflicts, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, can be considered as important cases where the EU's efforts, capabilities, weaknesses or strength can be observed. This thesis attempts at revealing the EU's conflict resolution impact in the region. Its major argument is that although the EU's security and energy interests in the region have increased, the EU has a limited role to play in the South Caucasian conflicts, due mainly to its internal constraints (inter-institutional rivalries and inconsistencies in Member States' approaches) but also to the impact of other actors in the region, especially Russia. This study concludes that the EU's constructive contributions to the peaceful resolution processes in this region would not only assure the Union's security, but also would confirm and improve the EU's capabilities and strength as an international security actor.

Keywords: Ethnic Conflicts, International Actorness, Conflict Resolution, European Neighbourhood Policy, European Security, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh Capability-Expectation Gap

ÖZET

Soğuk Savaş'ın bitişi uluslararası ilişkilere yeni kavramlar ve eski kavramlara yeni yorumlar getirmiştir. Yeniden yorumlanan ve insan güvenliği gibi boyutların da dâhil edilmesiyle genişletilen güvenlik algısı, Avrupa Birliği'nin (AB) dış politika tercihlerini ve uygulamalarını etkilemiştir. Soğuk Savaş'ın çift kutuplu yapısının zayıflayan etkisiyle, daha önce bastırılan ya da üstü örtülü duran devlet içi etnik çatışmalar serbest kalmış ve artan sayıdaki bu etnik çatışmalar diğer uluslararası aktörler üzerinde geniş ölçüde olumsuz etkiler yaratmıştır. Küresel çapta artan karşılıklı bağımlılık, ülkeleri herhangi bir tehlikenin istikrarsızlık ve yıkım kaynağına dönüşebileceği daha savunmasız bir çevreye sürüklemiştir. Bu nedenle, AB, kendi güvenliği ve istikrarı üzerinde olduğu kadar küresel güvenlik boyutunda çok önemli yansımaları bulunan yakın çevresindeki çatışmaların da barışçıl yollarla çözümlenmesine dâhil olma ihtiyacı hissetmiştir. AB'nin, güvenlik aktörü olarak uluslararası alandaki rolü, AB'nin etkinliği, imkânları ve köklü etnik çatışmaların barışçıl yollarla çözümlenmesine katkılarıyla birlikte uzun zamandır tartışılmaktadır. Güney Kafkaslardaki istikrarsızlık ve tehlike AB'nin kendi güvenliği ve refahı için öncelikli endişelerinden biri haline gelmiştir. Bu bağlamda, AB'nin Güney Kafkaslar'daki çatışmaların, Abhazy, Güney Osetya ve Nagorna-Karabağ, çözüm süreçlerine dâhil olması AB'nin uluslararası bir aktör olarak çabalarının, yeteneklerinin, zayıflıklarının ve gücünün gözlemlenebileceği önemli olaylardır. Bu tez AB'nin bölgedeki çatışma çözümü çabalarının etkisini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. İleri sürdüğü arguman, AB'nin artan güvenlik ve ekonomik çıkarlarına rağmen, Güney Kafkasya çatışmalarında oynadığı rolün sınırlı olduğudur. Bunun nedeni AB'nin kendi iç kısıtlamaları (kurumlararası rekabet ve üye devletlerin yaklaşımlarındaki tutarsızlıklar) ve aynı zamanda bölgedeki diğer aktörlerin (özellikle Rusya) etkisidir. Çalışmanın vardığı sonuç şudur: AB'nin bu bölgedeki çatışmaların barışçıl yollarla çözüm sürecine yapıcı katkıları, sadece Birliğin güvenliğini sağlamakla kalmayacak; aynı zamanda AB'nin uluslararası güvenlik aktörü olarak yetenek ve gücünü de arttıracaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etnik Çatışmalar, Uluslararası Aktör, Çatışma Çözümü, Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası, Avrupa Güvenliği, Güney Osetya, Abhazy, Nagorno-Karabağ, Yeterlilik-Beklenti Farkı

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ABBREVIATIONS

AO	: Autonomous Oblast
AP	: Action Plan
ASSR	: Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
BHN	: Basic Human Needs
BMO	: Border Monitoring Operation
BST	: Border Support Team
CEECs	: Central and Eastern European Countries
CFE	: Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
CFSP	: Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	: Commonwealth of Independent States
CSDP	: Common Security and Defence Policy
CSPs	: Country Strategy Papers
CSTO	: CIS Collective Security Treaty
PCA	: Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
EA	: Europe Agreement
EaP	: Eastern Partnership
ECSC	: European Coal and Steel Community
EEAS	: European External Action Service
ENP	: European Neighbourhood Policy
EPC	: European Political Cooperation
ESDP	: European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	: European Security Strategy
EU	: European Union
EUMM	: European Union Monitoring Mission
EuroAsEC	: Euro-Asian Economic Community
EUSR	: European Union Special Representative
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
GFG	: Groups of Friends of Georgia
GUAM	: Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova
ICG	: International Crisis Group
IDPs	: Internally Displaced People
IIFFMCG	: Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia

INOGATE	: Interstate Oil and Gas Transportation to Europe
IPRM	: Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism
JCC	: Joint Control Commission
MCA	: Millennium Challenge Account
MCC	: Millennium Challenge Corporation
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGOs	: Non-governmental Organisations
NIS	: Newly Independent States
NK	: Nagorno-Karabakh
OSCE	: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PFK	: Peacekeeping Forces
RRM	: Rapid Reaction Mechanism
SAAs	: Stabilization and Association Agreements
TACIS	: Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
TRACECA	: Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia
UN	: United Nations
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
UNOMIG	: United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia
USAID	: United States Agency for International Development
US	: United States
USSR	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WEU	: Western European Union

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War was an important external change in the evolution of the EU's foreign policy that forced the EU to become more engaged in the international events. At regional level, the EU's presence, as an influential international institution, has gained more attraction within third countries' foreign policy directions. Most newly independent states, such as Moldova, Georgia, the Baltic states and some Western Balkan countries, aimed to adjust their independence by becoming a member of the EU which is seen as a guarantor for their countries' security and prosperity in the long term. Therefore, the EU became more prominent in the international scene and strengthened its personality as an international actor.

Within this changing conjuncture the EU's policies especially towards the former Soviet countries became an important dynamic both for the EU's own foreign policy and for those countries which were affected and had to re-orient their foreign policy directions accordingly. Throughout the 1990s, a series of Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) were signed in order to arrange the relational basis between the EU and some of the post-Soviet countries which sought a strong partner to tackle political and economic disorders within their territories. The Commission drafted Country Strategy Papers and Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) was implemented to support these countries both economically, technically and politically. On the other hand, the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) aspiring for the EU membership were considered under "Europe Agreements" (EAs) as the legal base of their relations with the EU. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreements were less comprehensive than the Europe Agreements which tend to be more ambitious and conditional in terms of preparing the related countries for the EU membership process.¹

As indicated in the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) paper, the EU aims to promote a ring of well-governed countries to the East of the Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean, so they can get engaged in close cooperation on economic and security related

¹ Stefan Ganzle, "The European Neighbourhood Policy: A Strategy for Security in Europe?", in Stephan Ganzle and Allen G. Sens (eds.), *The Changing Politics of European Security*, New York: Palgrave, 2007, pp.112-113

issues.² New threats, which pose new challenges to the EU as well as new opportunities, have forced the Union to increase its actions in the international area not only on economic terms, but also backed up with political stances, especially with after the introduction of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and then European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). These developments have also empowered the EU's presence as an international actor on global issues. Deep rooted ethnic clashes, bureaucratic corruption, economic instabilities and other security related concerns can be counted as the major challenges that the EU has been dealing through channeling its relations with neighbouring countries on the ENP basis. Regional conflicts became more prominent on the EU's agenda as the main obstacle in implementing the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) tools in the concerned countries. The dynamics of the conflicts put setbacks over the efficiency of the policy. In order to eliminate the negative effects of these long term conflicts and to provide a more secure and prosperous neighbourhood in the EU's near abroad, the Union has intensified its actions and got more involved in the process of searching solutions for the violent conflicts beyond its borders.

After the 2004 enlargement, the widened and deepened EU began with an internal adjustment and consolidation process with new Member States and a range of internal arrangements were formed according to the new structure. While all these internal changes had been adopted, the EU's capacity to enlarge and the limits of the European continent began to be questioned; hence the Europeans realized that they had to seek another way to expand the zone of security and prosperity beyond the European continent without enlarging further. Consequently, the EU began to develop a "proximity policy" which offers a political perspective to extend the stability and prosperity area beyond the EU borders. This approach ultimately led to the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). In his speech, Prodi declared that they have to be ready "to offer more than a partnership and less than membership without precluding the latter".³ This policy had to be attractive, dynamic and should motivate the partners to cooperate more closely with the EU.⁴ Although this policy objective does not directly offer a membership prospect at the end, it also does not directly exclude eventual membership. However, despite the ambiguity with no concrete political outcome, it can be contended that the ENP is designed as an alternative to enlargement.

² Council of the European Union, A Secure Europe in a Better World European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003, pp.7-8

³ Romano Prodi, "A Wider Europe-A Proximity Policy as the Key to Stability", Sixth ECSA-World Conference, Brussel, 5-6 December 2002, p.5

⁴ Ibid., p.5

The European Neighbourhood Policy approach was firstly designed to offer an alternative to enlargement to spread the EU's common values, such as "the rule of law, good governance, respect for basic human rights, including minority rights, the promotion of good neighbourly relations, and the principle of market economy and sustainable development"⁵ in its near abroad. The ENP aims to deal with each country's own crucial, problematic issues separately and offer them tailor-made⁶ solutions by extending the scope and the dimensions of the EU's assistance programs within the framework of the ENP Action Plans.

While some analysts do not find it appropriate to consider the ENP as a conflict resolution/prevention tool⁷, there are others who consider the ENP as an EU effort in conflict prevention and crisis management.⁸ Although the EU speaks out the necessity to become more engaged in the neighbouring regions' long standing conflicts, the ENP Action Plans (APs) have made very little direct reference to the conflict resolution process. However, even though conflict resolution is not an explicit policy goal emphasized in the ENP, it can be considered as an outcome of the democratization process that this policy promotes. Moreover, the EU declares continuously its willingness to consider ways to strengthen further its engagement in resolving violent conflicts and gives full support to other international institutions which have the leading role in the resolution processes. However, some challenges through conducting the policy, such as vagueness in the ENP process, the lack of any strong conditionality imposed by the Action Plans, or the EU's coordination problems weaken the effectiveness of the EU's actions for enhancing peace in the neighboring regions. On the other hand, the success of this policy can only be achieved through reciprocal efforts and the will of all the parties.

Hill specifies: "conflict prevention cannot be regarded as a technical problem with a solution", rather it is a process which can be supplemented by good practices across

⁵ The European Commission, Communication From the Commission: European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper, Brussels, 12.5.2004, p.3

⁶ Roman Petrov, "Legal and Political Expectations of Neighbouring Countries from the European Neighbourhood Policy", in Marise Cremona and Gabriella Meloni (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy: a Framework for Modernisation*, European University Institute Department of Law EUI Working Papers LAW 2007/21; and European Neighbourhood Watch, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) Issue 62, July/August 2010; and The European Commission, Communication From the Commission: European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper, Brussels, 12.5.2004

⁷ For example see Gwendolyn Sasse, "The European Neighbourhood Policy and Conflict Management: A Comparison of Moldova and the Caucasus", *Ethnopolitics* Vol.8 No.3, 2009, pp.369-386

⁸ For example see Stefan Ganzle, "The European Neighbourhood Policy: A Strategy for Security in Europe?", in Stephan Ganzle and Allen G. Sens (eds.), *The Changing Politics of European Security*, New York: Palgrave, 2007, pp113-114

institutional, political, diplomatic and cultural dimensions.⁹ Whether through the ENP or not, the EU prefers to follow a long term solution through improving democratization and modernization processes in neighboring countries rather than directly engaging in the conflicts. In the South Caucasian conflicts, the EU has adopted the same perspective and kept its involvement in the resolution of the three intractable conflicts of the region-namely, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh- within the framework of promoting democracy and stability in the region.

The South Caucasus has gradually been regarded as an important area that could be an opportunity as well as a potential threat for the EU's further stability and security. Its geographic proximity, Caspian energy resource potential, as a corridor between Asia and Europe, possible threats such as smuggling, international crime and trafficking make the region as in the primary interest of the EU's security and prosperity. Moreover, the 2004 enlargement brought the EU closer to the region and its problematic issues, therefore, the EU has faced the need to stabilize and secure this region.

The existence of the long-standing conflicts has been blocking three South Caucasian states to enhance, or even to create, political and economic regional cooperation. These conflicts also infringed the implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs). Furthermore, any outbreak of the frozen conflicts can have spillover effects over the EU's policies that endanger the EU's security and interests in the region. These fragile spots can also create a "security vacuum" in the region that are left outside of government control which provides an ideal condition for transnational security challenges, such as terrorism, organized crime and illegal trafficking to flourish.¹⁰ This makes the region more vulnerable for any possible outbreak of a fight.

The delicate relations among the three Caucasus states and the balance of power among regional actors make it harder for the EU to deepen its level of engagement in the resolution of these conflicts. The EU has preferred to support the already existing conflict resolution mechanisms in the South Caucasus region instead of actively tackling the region's conflicts directly by itself. The EU follows a slow and deeper path to achieve success by promoting gradual political and economic reforms in the region and enhancing cooperation

⁹ Christopher Hill, "The EU's Capacity for Conflict Prevention", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 6, Kluwer Law International, 2001, p.319

¹⁰ Tracey C. German, "Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus", *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, pp.357-359

among conflicting parties. The Union frequently emphasizes that it is ready to play a greater role, however, as Tracey German indicates: “in spite of the numerous well-intentioned declarations of interests, little of any substance with regards to conflict resolution has actually been achieved.”¹¹

Compared to other international organizations, the EU’s political discourses and policies related to the resolution of the South Caucasian conflicts are relatively limited. Moreover, the high level of expectations from the EU’s involvement in these conflicts might sometimes lead miscalculations in the concerned countries’ foreign policy preferences. Although the EU can offer more with its soft power -support political efforts with economic implications such as allocating significant funding or efficient and well-addressed assistance programs- due to some internal and external constraints, it cannot meet all the expectations. In this regard, the EU’s policies toward the South Caucasus conflicts remain limited because of external and internal challenges. Its internal deficiencies, lack of cohesion and coordination between the Commission and Council, disagreements about the type and scope of the involvement in the South Caucasus region among Member States and more importantly the Russian reaction to any further EU involvement in the post-Soviet regions have mainly diluted and limited the Union’s political actions in the region.

This thesis aims to analyze the EU’s capabilities and willingness to get engaged in the neighboring South Caucasian states’ unresolved conflicts through using its political and economic instruments in order to enhance security and stability in Europe and around the globe. Conflicts are the main focus in this thesis; however, changing security perception is equally important to evaluate the ethnic conflicts after the Cold War. Therefore, security and changing security perceptions are also mentioned when and where necessary, and only in the framework of their relevance for those conflicts. It is mainly argued in this thesis that the EU’s role in the South Caucasian conflicts has remained limited, despite its growing security and energy interests in the region, due to some crucial internal limitations in terms of conducting its foreign policy and some external challenges. The lack of coherence in the EU’s policies, different activities or priorities of the Commission and the Council, and the lack of solidarity – stemming from the Member States’ different strategic backgrounds and different degrees of interests and capabilities – hamper the EU’s effectiveness in the conflict resolution. Apart from the EU’s own internal problems, the inherently complex nature of the conflicts in

¹¹ Ibid., p.358

the South Caucasus region between Georgia and its breakaway entities Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Nagorno-Karabakh and the Russian influence over the region – especially (and implicitly) over all these conflicts – hinder the EU's possible effectiveness over the resolution processes.

Within this framework, the thesis also uses some complementary arguments that might help to provide a broadened view to the issue. These are: The last enlargement process brought the region's problematic issues closer to the Union and prioritized involvement in the conflict resolution process in the region. However, the EU is not fully capable or ready enough to take a greater role in the South Caucasus conflict resolution process either politically or technically. In order to coordinate its engagement for enhanced cooperation and spreading democratic norms and values to new neighbouring countries for the sake of European security and prosperity, a new political instrument, the ENP, was presented. However; this is a quite new initiative whose "carrots and sticks" mechanisms are not as influential as in the enlargement policy. Mainly, the lack of membership prospect in the ENP structure and the loose conditionality framework weaken this new policy instrument in the eyes' of the recipient partners. Moreover, the level of EU attraction perceived by three Caucasian states have differentiated; thus the efficiency of this policy shows no stable and constant progress over the conflict resolution processes in the region due to the nested nature of the conflicts.

To sum up, this paper defends that; (1) the EU's increased interest in the South Caucasus region, especially after the last enlargement, has forced the EU to become more engaged in the region as well as in the region's long-lasting conflicts. (2) As an international actor, the EU has some constraints in resolving the region's conflicts not only due to its own domestic nature or weaknesses, but also due to externally driven obstacles, mainly due to the Russian presence in the region. (3) The ENP might be an effective tool as long as reciprocal willingness among the parties is provided; however, it is not forceful enough to overcome the roots of disputes. (4) In order to become more active in the region, the EU can offer added value with strengthened political, economic and technical assistance programs which will create a sense of attraction for conflicting parties that will eventually strengthen the EU's position in the region. This paper concludes that the EU has to increase its involvement in conflict resolution not only for enhancing its global prestige as an actor, but also for its future security, stability and prosperity.

Within this context, the first chapter of this thesis elaborates on the EU's actorness in the conflict resolution process through an analysis of the historical evolution of its capabilities, mechanisms and its institutional background. First, a general overview of the conflict studies literature is given in order to comprehend the scope and the meaning of the concepts used in the field and in this thesis. Ethnic conflicts and changing perceptions of security, especially after the Cold War, are analyzed briefly to provide a basis for the point of departure of this study. Then, the EU's role as an international actor, the evolution of its foreign policy, improvements in its capabilities and mechanisms employed in conflict resolution are analyzed in this chapter. Finally, the European Neighbourhood Policy is scrutinized in order to reveal its contributions and weaknesses. "What is the European Neighbourhood Policy?", "What are the objectives and methods?" and "What are the expectations from the EU in the realm of conflict resolution?" are the main questions that are asked to analyze the direct or indirect effects of the Neighbourhood Policy over conflict resolution.

The second chapter concentrates on the increased significance of the South Caucasus region in the EU's political agenda. The Union's increased attention towards the region's problems is analyzed within the framework of the EU's security and energy related concerns and interests in the region. Political and economic factors, which get the EU's attention and cause doubts over the EU's actions, are examined in this chapter. A specific attention is given to the historical evolution of the three intractable conflicts of the region, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Because the resolution of a deep rooted conflict is a complex and lengthy process, a comprehensive analysis should be made in order to comprehend the root causes of the conflict and search for solutions according to the essence of the problem. With this aim and to complete the framework which is drawn in the first chapter, a brief historical overview of the region's conflicts is presented in a detailed way. "Why have divergences turned into intractable conflicts between the parties?", "What are the relations between the regional actors and how do these relations affect the evolution of the region's conflicts?" are the questions asked in this regard. A specific reference to the Russian influence in the region and its conflicts is also made in this chapter.

In the final chapter, the level of the EU engagement in the three South Caucasian conflicts and the EU's efforts in the conflict resolution process in these conflicts is analyzed with its political and economic components. The EU's incremental involvement in the region has provided the EU some opportunities as well as some challenges. The challenges that have

constrained the EU's further involvement in the region and its conflicts are further evaluated. The inclusion of the three South Caucasian states into the ENP framework and the appointment of the Special Representative (EUSR) are important signs that reflect the EU's increasing attention and the priority that it gives to the region's problems. For this reason, these two initiatives that have increased the Union's actions and profile in the region are analyzed specifically. Furthermore, the impact of the Russian policies in the conflicts between Georgia and South Ossetia/Abkhazia and between Armenia-Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) are also considered as an important variable in terms of evaluating the level of the EU's involvement in the resolution of these conflicts. In this chapter, the EU's position is also compared with other international actors' stances in these three unresolved conflicts. An evaluation of some other possibilities through which the EU can contribute to the solution, apart from being a mere observer in the resolution process, is also provided. Along with the other international organizations' efforts in the conflicts, US role in the region is also briefly explained within the framework of other international actors' position in the region. However, Russian policies are given greater emphasis in the whole thesis because Russia is more influential in the South Caucasus due not only to its proximity to the region but also to its historical ties and its stance as the most important regional power.

In the final chapter, the expectations of the parties involved in the conflict and the EU's capabilities to respond those expectations are also scrutinized. Although in conflict resolution military power is an important asset, the EU as an international actor, has just entered into that area and thus its capabilities are not mature and equipped enough to handle the hard side of the disputes. The EU is more likely to be successful in soft security, such as applying economic sanctions over partner countries or offering incentives, like creating channels for interaction, social learning and monitoring the process.¹² At that point, the political willingness and the expectations of the partner countries party to the disputes are equally important. This is especially the case because the EU's enthusiastic actions and the three South Caucasus states' stances are quite different toward any deeper EU involvement in the process. While Georgia has been more demanding for greater EU involvement, Azerbaijani and Armenian perspectives are far from being enthusiastic.¹³ These two countries are rather reluctant and prudent in demanding greater EU involvement in their conflict.¹⁴

¹² Nicu Popescu, "EU and The Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International, 2009, pp.461-465

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 465-473

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.465-473

These different expectations have created a “capability-expectations gap”¹⁵ for the EU. This issue is also further evaluated in the third chapter by questioning the effects and reflections of these differences over the relations between the South Caucasian countries and the EU.

¹⁵ Christopher Hill, “Capability-Expectation Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe’s International Role”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.31 No.3, September 1993, pp.305-328

CHAPTER I. CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND THE EU'S ACTORNESS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In this chapter, the EU's role in the international area and its foreign policy history are evaluated along with the literature on the conflict studies in order to provide a general background for the following chapters on the EU's policy on the South Caucasian conflicts. The developments in the EU foreign policy history are applied to understand the EU's transformation into a more capable and responsible actor in world politics, as well as in promoting security and peace around its vicinity. A general overview into the conflict studies literature helps to understand the essence of the EU's policy objectives in providing peace and security.

II. AN OVERVIEW OF CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION LITERATURE

Conflicts have always been a part of human history. Different groups of people ¹⁶ have confronted with each other throughout time. Conflict is, indeed, an interaction within which humans consciously get involved to pursue their goals.¹⁷ This struggle over incompatible goals implies more than a mere competition, since "competition shades off into conflict when the parties try to enhance their own position by reducing the others and try to thwart others from gaining their own goals".¹⁸ Human history has been shaped and been re-shaping according to the processes and consequences of these confrontations and wars.

Conflicts may be violent or non-violent; controllable or uncontrollable; resolvable or intractable under various sets of circumstances.¹⁹ A conflict can be defined, in a more comprehensive scope, as the clashing of interests on national values and issues such as territory, border, ethnic, religious or regional autonomy, independence, self-determination,

¹⁶ Here "a group of people" is considered as a human collectivity, the individual members of which share the same beliefs, values or ethnicity.

¹⁷ James E. Dougherty, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr., *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, New York: Longman, 2001, p.189

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.189

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.189

ideology, national or international power or resources, for a certain time period.²⁰ The underlying reasons might vary throughout time. As Oberg indicates, most of today's conflicts have a mainly "identity and existence" dimension, whereas earlier conflicts had been mostly related to more abstract and distant issues as ideology or class.²¹

Conflicts are generally considered as "power-related issues deriving from a scarcity of resources or incompatible goals".²² The total eradication of conflicts is both impossible and maybe undesirable for the progress of humankind. However, as Tocci indicates, the ultimate aim is "to minimize the cost of conflict in terms of violence and disorder".²³ According to John Burton, "conflict is not endemic, but arises under specific socio-economic structures in which basic human needs (BHN) are frustrated".²⁴ BHNs include both ontological needs, i.e; physical security or political participation, and subjective psychological needs, i.e; recognition of an identity.²⁵ Unlike interests, all these BHNs are universal, permanent and non-negotiable, therefore, when BHNs are frustrated, conflict emerges.²⁶

Burton emphasizes that non-fulfillment of the basic needs is the most crucial reason that may lead the parties into a conflict.²⁷ According to the BHN theory, rather than physical and physiologic needs, identity, recognition and sense of security may become a priority in conflict situations.²⁸ He focuses on the importance of two significant needs in the outbreak and the resolution of a conflict, "identity" and "the need of security".²⁹ Therefore, it is highly important to detect the parties' fundamental needs in order to understand the essence of conflict and to search for an adequate solution to a specific problem. In this sense, a

²⁰ *Conflict Barometer*, Heidelberg Institute for Internal Conflict Research
http://www.hiik.de/en/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2002.pdf, accessed on 25.03.2012

²¹ Jan Oberg, "Conflict Mitigation in Reconstruction and Development", December 1996
<http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/oberg.htm>, accessed on 30.10.2012

²² Natalie Tocci, "Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor", *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.5

²³ *Ibid.*, p.5

²⁴ John Burton, *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*, London: Macmillan, 1990, cited in Natalie Tocci, "Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor", *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.5

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.5

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.5

²⁷ John Burton, source n/a, cited in Reha Yılmaz and Sezai Özçelik, "Çatışma Teorileri Işığında Gürcistan ve Karabağ Çatışmalarının Çözülmesi", in Atilla Sandıklı (ed.) *Teoriler Işığında Güvenlik, Savaş, Barış ve Çatışma Çözümleri*, BİLGESAM Yayınları, 2012, p.281

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.282

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.281

comprehensive analysis, by considering all basic dynamics behind the conflictual relation, would be helpful to respond the conflict.

Similar to Burton, Kelman also concentrates on the non-fulfillment of the basic needs or threats to the fulfillment of these basic needs in a more social-psychological perspective of conflict relationship.³⁰ He emphasizes: “psychological analysis is based on the assumption that subjective factors play a role in the perception and interpretation of events.”³¹

“Identity, security and similarly powerful collective needs, and the fear and concerns about survival associated with them, are often important causal factors in intergroup and intercommunal conflict. The causes of conflict generally combine objective and subjective factors, which are related to each other in a circular fashion... subjective forces linked to basic needs and existential fears contribute heavily to the conflict’s escalation and perpetuation.”³²

Therefore, such subjective perceptions of the parties towards each other, apart from objective variables, generate conflictual relations and identify conflict escalation, mostly in ethnic conflicts. Therefore, changes in the perception of threats or security would eventually lead to a change in the conflict itself.

Conflict studies are a wide, interrelated field ranging from psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, analysts and researchers. The reduction and eventual eradication of war; and the control and resolution of violent conflicts by peaceful means present the central concerns of peace studies.³³ The very same concerns have also been shared by many International Relations theorists who seek the same goals, especially after the First World War.³⁴

Peace studies have been widely broadened and have also interrelated concerns in the realm of conflict studies. Oliver Richmond clarifies the relationship between the notion of peace and conflict as:

“Peace research focused upon a rationalist and structuralist explanation of conflict, which implied an attempt to engage with a ‘better’ peace than was being experienced

³⁰ Herbert C. Kelman, “Social-Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict”, in I. William Zartman (ed.), *Peacemaking in International Conflict*, United States Institute of Peace: Washington, 2007, pp.61-107

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.63

³² *Ibid.*, p.65

³³ Peter Lawler, “Introduction: What is Peace Studies” in Paul D. Williams (ed.), *Security Studies: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p.74

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.74

in the Cold War context in particular. Conflict studies focused upon understanding the roots of conflict in the context of Burtonian human needs debates, and in particular looking at methods to end conflict, such as peacekeeping, mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution, or to transform conflict into a more positive force. From both there emerged an agenda which focused upon the widely used negative or positive peace. This led to the development of thinking about a more emancipatory notion of peace.”³⁵

He also draws attention to the point of the interconnected relation between peace and conflict by stating “an assumption of peace tied up in the framework of a group’s position on a particular piece of territory, or the superiority of one culture, identity or religion over another, can easily become a source of conflict.”³⁶

Peace researchers take the concept of violence as a point of departure in order to develop their peace theory. As Galtung emphasizes, the term violence should be broadened enough to evaluate and frame conflict in order to take concrete action for the pacification of the situation.³⁷ The extended definition of violence requires also the extended definition of peace; thus, peace becomes to be seen not only as a mere “absence of violence” (negative peace), but also the absence of structural violence which indicates human integration and social equality among people in the distribution of resources (positive peace).³⁸ Since the term violence is a very vast concept which has many intricate dimensions and specifications, the way to mitigate violence differs according to situations when each component changes. Thereby, in some cases peace cannot be obtained only by the elimination of physical violence and a more specific and concrete solution has to be found in order to achieve sustainable peace among conflicting groups.

On the other hand, violence can be regarded as a natural outcome of the conflict. However, not all conflicts necessarily involve direct physical violence. Surely, this does not also mean that there are no risks for that conflict to turn into a violent conflict in the end. This is because the evolution of conflict is a very unpredictable and unstable process that combines many variables. Conflict and violence are usually confused as if they naturally coexist, however, conflicts can be manageable and does not necessarily contain violence. As Oberg defines, conflicts are “positive and some are indeed necessary” and what should be prevented

³⁵ Oliver P. Richmond, *Peace in International Relations*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p.98

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13

³⁷ Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research”, *Journal of Peace Research* Vol.6 No.3, 1969, p. 168

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 168

or eliminated is violence, not the conflicts because differences bring about human progress and development.³⁹

“Constructive conflict processes, that are diagnosed and treated well, lead to development. The other side of the coin is that destructive conflict processes, those diagnosed falsely and treated counter-productively, lead to violence. Sustainable development is fundamentally based on non-violent principles that permit an optimum realization of human, societal and ecological potentials.”⁴⁰

The actual or potential violence determines which approach should be considered during the process of solving the issue. Conflict prevention strategies, management and resolution mechanisms can be addressed within appropriate circumstances. In order to settle conflicts and to bring peace and stability to reciprocal relations, a common basis should be found for both parties, so that they can mutually benefit and prefer to change their stance towards a more cooperative manner rather than confronting each other. Urgency level, as observed in actual violence applied in killing masses; the structural/political conditions in conflicting parties; and the level of international actors’ preferences on the subject determine the type of involvement in the conflict.⁴¹ A more peaceful and productive perspective might pave the way for deeper consensus and integration among conflicting sides. To find a common language between opposing parties and to create feelings of commonality in purpose by projecting a “harmony of interests” might also bring the sides closer to settle the conflicted issues and enhance cooperation among the parties.⁴²

In order to maintain peace, avoiding the past memories and future possible theories is important. Instead, parties should concentrate on the present to find a viable solution to the problems. Within this respect, conflict resolution aims to bring constructive solutions, where possible for all parties to the conflict and therefore requires a deep, comprehensive analysis of the disputed issue by searching for the root causes of the conflict in order to reach the essence of the problem and solve it on the ground.

³⁹ Jan Oberg, “Conflict Mitigation in Reconstruction and Development”, December 1996
<http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/oberg.htm>, accessed on 30.10.2012

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research”, *Journal of Peace Research* Vol.6 No.3, 1969, p. 167

⁴² Ibid., p. 167

I.I.I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In conflict studies literature much of the conceptual confusion is seen over the scope and the definitions of the terms “prevention”, “management” and “resolution” since these terms are frequently and almost interchangeably used to describe all activities and processes in dealing with a conflict, although some of these terminological approaches have a distinct implications for the outcome of a conflict situation.⁴³ In this section some important concepts used in the field are clarified in order to avoid ambiguity or confusion over terminology.

Conflict prevention is considered as a long-term project and aims to prevent violence from even breaking out and it might also require some urgent intervention at the last minute.⁴⁴ Although there are discussions over the scope and the definition of conflict prevention, a consensus seems to be provided for the use of a more narrowly defined conceptual basis limiting conflict prevention only to the early-phases of conflict rather than broadening to the post-conflict stage.⁴⁵

Conflict/crisis management requires preventing escalation and spreading out any possible area once conflict has already erupted.⁴⁶ On the other hand, some scholars broaden the meaning of conflict management as a multi-stage process “incorporating three broadly defined phases; conflict prevention, crisis management and conflict resolution (including post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation)”.⁴⁷ Some others prefer to use this concept in a more narrow meaning as the limitation, mitigation and containment of conflict rather than the durable elimination of the causes of the conflict.⁴⁸

⁴³ Centre for Conflict Resolution, “Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Draft Distance Learning Course”, Bradford, UK: Department of Peace Studies, 2000

http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/dislearn/body_unit1.html, accessed on 20.03.2012

⁴⁴ Christopher Hill, “The EU’s Capacity for Conflict Prevention”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* Vol.6 No.3, 2001, p.332

⁴⁵ Alice Ackermann, “Idea and Practice of Conflict Prevention”, *Journal of Peace Research* Vol.40 No.3, May 2003, p.341

⁴⁶ Christopher Hill, “The EU’s Capacity for Conflict Prevention”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* Vol.6 No.3, 2001, p.332

⁴⁷ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, “The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution”, *MIRICO Report: Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.4

⁴⁸ Centre for Conflict Resolution, “Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Draft Distance Learning Course”, Bradford, UK: Department of Peace Studies, 2000

www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/dislearn/body_unit1.html, accessed on 20.03.2012.; and Christopher Hill, “The EU’s Capacity for Conflict Prevention”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* Vol.6 No.3, 2001, p.332; and Dennis J. Sandole, “A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A Three Pillar Approach” <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/sandole.htm>, accessed on 04.04.2012

Conflict settlement refers to an approach emphasizing the reaching of an agreement between the parties through negotiation and bargaining which often involves compromise or some concessions from conflicting sides.⁴⁹ According to the conflict settlement approach, “if a conflict cannot be resolved easily, it can be managed with the (re)creation of stable balances”.⁵⁰ A settlement might often serve as the quickest solution to a violent conflict; hence it is being criticized for offering a temporary solution to the deep rooted problems because the underlying relationship and structure that have caused the conflict remain unaddressed.⁵¹

Conflict resolution advocates have also criticized the conflict settlement approach by arguing that this approach failed to encourage conflict transformation and resolution which would eliminate the roots of conflict on the ground.⁵² Instead, it remains inadequate and superficially deals with the real causes of conflict with an attempt to manage conflict by eliminating excessive violence, however, the conflict itself remains intact.⁵³ In Burton’s view, conflict resolution deals with the underlying roots of the conflict; and conflict settlement primarily deals with less vital, superficial issues in the conflict.⁵⁴ Marieke Kleiboer explains the difference between these two approaches as follows:

“... settlement refers to a conflict management process in which one seeks to take away the negative consequences of violent conflictual behavior. Conflict resolution requires that the underlying causes of conflict are effectively addressed.”⁵⁵

⁴⁹Centre for Conflict Resolution, “Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Draft Distance Learning Course”, Bradford, UK: Department of Peace Studies, 2000

http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/dislearn/body_unit1.html, accessed on 20.03.2012

⁵⁰ Natalie Tocci, “Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor”, *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.5

⁵¹ Centre for Conflict Resolution, “Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Draft Distance Learning Course”, Bradford, UK: Department of Peace Studies, 2000

http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/dislearn/body_unit1.html, accessed on 20.03.2012

⁵² Natalie Tocci, “Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor”, *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.5

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.5

⁵⁴ John Burton, *Violence Explained*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997, cited in Reha Yılmaz and Sezai Özçelik, “Çatışma Teorileri Işığında Gürcistan ve Karabağ Çatışmalarının Çözümlemesi”, in Atilla Sandıklı (ed.) *Teoriler Işığında Güvenlik, Savaş, Barış ve Çatışma Çözümleri*, BİLGESAM Yayınları, 2012, p.282

⁵⁵ Marieke Kleiboer, “Understanding Success and Failure in International Mediation”, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40 (2), 1996, cited in Natalie Tocci, “Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor”, *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.5

The term conflict resolution is used as a generic term in describing all efforts and mechanisms to detect the core reasons of conflict in order to cease the violence and bring peace and stability to a deadly conflict. Some analysts use this term since it is the earliest and most commonly used term among analysts in dealing with conflicts in this field.⁵⁶ In most cases, the conflict resolution term is used to refer to its comprehensive meaning addressing all aspects in a given conflict by encompassing all the other dimensions of conflict prevention and conflict/crisis management strategies.⁵⁷

“... conflict resolution is a more comprehensive approach based on mutual problem-sharing between the conflict parties. Resolution of a conflict implies that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed, changing behavior, so it is no longer violent, attitudes so they are no longer hostile, and structures so they are no longer exploitative.”⁵⁸

In that regard, conflict resolution aims to establish peace through social change and enabling change in intersubjective perceptions on a permanent basis by dealing with root causes of the conflicts. Oberg defines conflict resolution as “voluntarily enter[ing] into an arrangement that identifies and treats the root causes of a dispute and distributes the disputed values or interests in such a manner that the conflict will not re-appear, not even in disguise”.⁵⁹ The term is used to refer both to the process to bring about changes in violent behaviors or attitudes and to the completion of the process; therefore, it is difficult to specify its precise meaning.⁶⁰

One of the most important aspects of conflict resolution is the assumption that conflicts are inevitable, even necessary and useful.⁶¹ Violence and conflict terms are

⁵⁶ Oliver Ramsbotham Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011, p.9

⁵⁷ Georgi Kamov, “EU’s Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas”, Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, p.4

⁵⁸ Centre for Conflict Resolution, “Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Draft Distance Learning Course”, Bradford, UK: Department of Peace Studies, 2000

http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/dislearn/body_unit1.html, accessed on 20.03.2012

⁵⁹ Jan Oberg, “Conflict Mitigation in Reconstruction and Development”, December 1996

<http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/oberg.htm>, accessed on 30.10.2012

⁶⁰ Centre for Conflict Resolution, “Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Draft Distance Learning Course”, Bradford, UK: Department of Peace Studies, 2000

http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/dislearn/body_unit1.html, accessed on 20.03.2012

⁶¹ Reha Yılmaz and Sezai Özçelik, “Çatışma Teorileri Işığında Gürcistan ve Karabağ Çatışmalarının Çözülmesi”, in Atilla Sandıklı (ed.) *Teoriler Işığında Güvenlik, Savaş, Barış ve Çatışma Çözümleri*, BİLGESAM Yayınları, 2012, p.277

separately addressed and conflicts are considered within a more constructive aspect.⁶² Conflict resolution parameters primarily focus on the de-escalation of violence, reaching reasonable outcomes and the sustainability of these outcomes.⁶³ Conflict resolution focuses on the achievement of positive peace, which addresses the elimination of direct, structural and cultural violence.⁶⁴

“The process of conflict resolution includes becoming aware of a conflict, diagnosing its nature and applying appropriate methods”.⁶⁵ Conflicts, as their naturally born features, are not stable; they possess differentiation within time and have some stages, such as escalation/de-escalation.⁶⁶ Furthermore, some other added variables can change the course of the violent action within time.⁶⁷ The complexity of the process has also affected the perception and the methods applied to analyze, solve or cease the violent action. As Tocci argues, “conflict settlement and conflict resolution approaches need not be mutually exclusive; on the contrary they can be complementary”.⁶⁸ Likely, the conflict settlement, conflict resolution, prevention and management are not necessarily mutually exclusive; rather, have interconnected consequences over the others, since they can be applied at different stage of the same conflict.

Although in the EU’s official documents the “conflict prevention” term is preferred to be pronounced, the literal meaning of this concept does not cover what the EU has been essentially practicing in the field. The EU’s activities and actions in handling disputes can be broadened with its contribution to tackle the root causes and the economic and civilian aid mechanisms that it uses in post-conflict reconstruction. The EU can also facilitate to pave the way for the conflicting parties to come together on a mutual basis, as a mediator, to transform their incompatible goals in a more cooperative manner in which both sides can benefit more.

Peace occurs, as Oberg indicates, “when the conflicting actors calculate that there is more to gain from that than from war or fighting. Thus, all aid agencies should use their

⁶² Ibid., p.277

⁶³ Ibid., p.277

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.277-278

⁶⁵ Centre for Conflict Resolution, “Introduction to Conflict Resolution: Draft Distance Learning Course”, Bradford, UK: Department of Peace Studies, 2000
http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/dislearn/body_unit1.html, accessed on 20.03.2012

⁶⁶ Natalie Tocci, “Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor”, *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.7

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.7

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.7

creative capacities to not only build bridges, but also [to] provide bridge-building skills.”⁶⁹ No direct outsider solution would be sustainable or applicable for the conflicting sides. Any external actor can only help to pacify the tension and provide a basis for the parties to find their own solutions; any other intervention except this, would complicate the situation and deepen the tension. At that point, the EU can provide an alternative perspective, referring to its own historical experiences, to reach a common solution. As Oberg indicated “what people need in war-torn society is a good experience and seeing hopes fulfilled” and realizing that the others are human too (in Oberg’s terminology “re-humanization”).⁷⁰

Post-conflict reconstruction is also an important integral part of the conflict settlement process in which outsider donors generally have huge responsibilities in monitoring the post-conflict situation. Signing a peace agreement does not equally mean that ethnic conflicts permanently end and peace will prevail in the region. The sense of threat and insecurity cannot easily fade away from the memories of societies. Although physical structure can be reconstructed; social, psychological and mental structures cannot be easily re-established as in pre-war social situation when people have lost their families or displaced from their homes.⁷¹ In that sense, reconstruction in war-torn societies does not simply refer to re-build infrastructures, but also to reconstruction of human social, cultural, psychological structures and this aspect reflects the human dimension of conflict settlement.⁷² Tocci argues:

“...through conditionality, a principal mediator may alter the incentive structure underpinning conflict and induce an agreement. However, the subjective and psychological aspects of conflict do not necessarily change. A deeper process of social change, relating to the principal parties’ perceived identities and interests, is necessary to foster a longer term process of conflict transformation and resolution.”⁷³

Here, changes in conflicting parties’ perception towards each other and the conflict have constitutive importance in establishing peace. Conflict resolution should address the basic needs and fears in order to find a valid solution that satisfies and secures all parties’

⁶⁹ Jan Oberg, “Conflict Mitigation in Reconstruction and Development”, December 1996
<http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/oberg.htm>, accessed on 30.10.2012

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Natalie Tocci, “Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor”, *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.15

concerns over their fundamental needs – material and psychological – to survive. To create the environment in which both conflicting entities could mutually live together within a harmony under democracy and prosperity is equally important to sustain the peaceful environment. This requires building mutual trust among people through democratic institutions, integrating civil society organizations into the administrative body, an equally balanced economic growth and prosperity among both conflicting groups. Under these circumstances it is important to provide people with an environment which is built upon mutual trust and equal allocation of resources which will lead them to live together peacefully. The EU's involvement in finding a solution to the South Caucasus region's intractable conflicts, both politically and economically, may provide the creation of social coherence among people and offer many advantages to stabilize and prosper the region.

As a closer look at the conceptual framework suggests, there is no concrete agreement in the literature to make a clear distinction between the concepts of conflict prevention, conflict/crises management and conflict resolution. There are different definitions to indicate the context of these terms, however, there is no a common consensus on what exactly conflict resolution entails⁷⁴, or where is the line between these concepts on describing the activities and processes to end a conflict. Although these terms are frequently and almost interchangeably used to define the activities to end the conflicts, some distinct implications can be observed regarding the approaches and outcome.

What is examined in this thesis is currently all, and any further possible efforts and contributions made by the EU in pacifying or ending conflicts by giving special emphasis on the South Caucasian conflicts. All conflict handling activities and actions of the EU in the South Caucasian conflicts is the focus in analyzing the EU's stance in the region ranging from conflict prevention and management strategies and conflict resolution. As clarified above conflict resolution refers to a more comprehensive and long-term project which addresses the essence of the conflictual conditions and effectively search for concrete solutions which provide sustainable peace by eliminating the core reasons of the conflicts. The EU, itself, as a long-term peace project, has experienced the transformative processes which lead to harmonizing clashing interests on a mutual basis and acting in a more coordinated way. Within this context, the EU has many foreign policy tools to assist and serve as a model to

⁷⁴ Emma J. Stewart, "The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?", Plymouth International Studies Working Paper, p.4
<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

conflicting parties; however, it is also crucial for the EU to apply its assets and experiences within a more coherent and effective way in handling the conflicts beyond its boundaries, and especially in its neighbourhood. Before examining the EU's role in the international arena and the EU's capabilities and efforts in the region, a general overview to the nature of ethnic conflicts with reference to the changing international security perceptions should be specified in order to evaluate the motives and dynamics that make the South Caucasus region and its conflicts a security concern for the EU.

I.I.II. ETHNICITY AND VIOLENT CONFLICT

After 1990s, with the fading of the Cold War's effect in international arena, new challenges and opportunities have determined the states' foreign policy agendas. Along with the end of the Cold War's bipolar structure, the previously suppressed latent ethnic conflicts have been released.⁷⁵ Besides the visible reasons for an outbreak of an ethnic conflict, the

⁷⁵All around the world, there has been a wide range of conflicts spanning from small to large scale which contains differentiated degree and density of violence. In 2011, 388 conflicts were recorded. 48% of them consisted of violence, whereas this proportion was nearly 25% in the 2002 report with a total number of conflicts as 173. (Conflict Barometer 2002, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, http://www.hiik.de/en/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2002.pdf;; Conflict Barometer 2011, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, http://ipsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ConflictBarometer_2011.pdf both accessed on 20.03.2012)

In 2011, compared to the previous year data, the total number of conflicts increased from 363 to 388 (Conflict Barometer 2010, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, http://www.hiik.de/en/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2010.pdf, accessed on 20.03.2012, Conflict Barometer 2011, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, http://ipsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ConflictBarometer_2011.pdf both accessed on 20.03.2012)

Among these 388 conflicts, there were 20 wars and 18 limited wars, amounting to 38 highly violent conflicts. Another 148 conflicts were classified as violent crises, thereby exceeding last year's all-time high. The remaining 202 conflicts were conducted without violent means, with 87 conflicts being judged as non-violent crises and 115 as disputes.

(Conflict Barometer 2010, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, http://www.hiik.de/en/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2010.pdf, accessed on 20.03.2012.)

During the 2002-2011 periods, the number of intrastate conflicts has escalated from 107 to 301 while the interstates conflicts' number increased 24 and violent contained action within this number constitutes 143 of the 301 conflicts.

(Conflict Barometer 2002, http://www.hiik.de/en/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2002.pdf, accessed on 20.03.2012; Conflict Barometer 2011 Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, http://ipsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ConflictBarometer_2011.pdf)

All these statistical numbers show the incremental rise of violent conflict in worldwide within only a decade.

unfulfillment of basic human needs and the psycho-analytic processes between the ethnic groups can be regarded as the latent reasons that eventually lead to conflict.⁷⁶

Ethnicity might not necessarily be the underlying reason of a violent conflict. There have usually been some other fundamental reasons which constitute a fertile ground for tension among people such as socioeconomic inequalities, discrimination towards a group or a sense of threat towards one group's identity and survival. Ethnic conflicts may arise as a result of actual or perceived oppression or discrimination by majority/minority populations or ethnocentrism among different ethnic groups in close proximity.⁷⁷

Inter ethnic cooperation and peaceful coexistence are possible. However, the different actors and varying factors that are at work should be carefully analyzed whether they lead to escalation of the violence or to construct a peaceful settlement among conflicting parties. Otherwise, by simply looking the underlying reasons of conflict from an ethno-political point of view might lead to conclude an inadequate, or worse a mistaken deduction in managing the conflicts.⁷⁸

In a more interdependent world, with the huge side effects of globalization, the importance and effectiveness of cooperation among states should not be underestimated. Although the power of nationalism has not lessened in terms of clinging to human identification and ethnic identities; these multiple ethnic identities can coexist within a peaceful and cooperative manner, unless they are provoked and get threatened for their own survival. As Stephen Wolff indicates:

“It would be mistaken to assume that ethnopolitics is only a matter of confrontation between different politically mobilized groups and states. On the contrary, there is a range of examples where ethnopolitics is pursued in a spirit of compromise and cooperation.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Reha Yılmaz and Sezai Özçelik, “Çatışma Teorileri Işığında Gürcistan ve Karabağ Çatışmalarının Çözümlemesi”, in Atilla Sandıklı (ed.) *Teoriler Işığında Güvenlik, Savaş, Barış ve Çatışma Çözümleri*, BİLGESAM Yayınları, 2012, p.287

⁷⁷ Stephen Iwan Griffiths, “*Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict Threat to European Security*”, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Oxford University Press, 1993, p 14

⁷⁸ Stephen Wolff, *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective*, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006, p.3

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.3

An outbreak of a war or a conflict cannot be explained by resting upon one single theory.⁸⁰ The causes of war vary also according to temporal conditions, environmental conditions or even to domestic policies followed by weak or powerful leaders. Therefore, there is no any single cause of conflict or war and “the putative causes are not only multiple but they have kept multiplying throughout history.”⁸¹

Ethnic movements in plural societies might tend to promote the goals of cultural and regional autonomy or recognition of national minorities; and those tendencies might get the shape of more extreme form throughout time with suitable conditions and are evaluated within separatist movements.⁸² In such societies, ethnic conflicts are potentially more explosive and often threatening the structure and the unity of the state.⁸³ In this regard, government policies are settled to prevent these serious challenges to the territorial integrity of their state by consolidating their power to control them.

In violent ethnic conflicts, the sense of despair and direct insult towards the self-identity of another can trigger the aggression and incite violence in return. Mutual insurances on the conflicting parties' own interests generally turn the dispute into a protracted conflict. In conflict evaluation, time is an important component which designates to find the proper solution to a conflict. For groups of people or nations who have suffered from their losses which passed from generation to generation, the problem might be somewhat easier to solve since the traumatic memories are not so alive. Likewise the possibility of mutually hurting stalemate, which is a deterrent element to get both parties closer around a more viable solution, at least to search and negotiate for a peaceful settlement, has a relatively higher chance to be reached. In the South Caucasian states, historical developments between separatist minority groups and the central government have fed the sense of insecurity and doubts among society. This mutual distrust toward each other's actions or policies has hampered the development for a common approach or cooperation and harmony within the state. As Oberg indicated, “societies, nations or other collectivities cannot make peace if their representatives are fulfilled with traumas, hate or deep distrust of each other”.⁸⁴ It is, thus,

⁸⁰ James E. Dougherty, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr., *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, New York: Longman, 2001, p.189

⁸¹ Ibid., p.189

⁸² Leokadia Drobizheva, “Perestroika and The Ethnic Consciousness of Russians “, in Gail Lapidus, Victor Zaslowsky with Philip Goldman (eds.) , *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics*, Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.98

⁸³ Ibid., p.98

⁸⁴ Jan Oberg, “Conflict Mitigation in Reconstruction and Development”, December 1996
<http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pes/oberg.htm>, accessed on 30.10.2012

quite important for the third party involved in dialogue to show great sensitivity in dialogue setting and validating both sides' personal, or national dignity by considering the both sides' relations throughout time.⁸⁵

On the other hand, the rising ethnic consciousness within an appropriate environment might serve as an important determinant to trigger separatist action. In most cases, rising nationalist discourses, i.e in Georgia, escalate the counter nationalist feelings among ethnic groups. Most ethnic wars occur where established mechanisms for mediating tension break down and the minority groups feel a sense of frustration because of their unsatisfied needs; psychological or material. In most Caucasus conflicts, historically or currently, an ethnic group has absolutely an unsatisfied basic need; however this need clashes with another groups' need.⁸⁶ Therefore, satisfying one group's need means dissatisfying the others; i.e for Georgians, their basic human need is security in the framework of their territorial integrity, whilst South Ossetians and Abkhazians define their basic human need as their identities in the framework of their self-determination right; and these two groups' needs confront with each other.⁸⁷

Within this perspective, the varying number of ethnic groups in the South Caucasus constitutes possible risks for the region's security as well as for international security due to its spillover effects. The region's ethnic composition and historical Russian border-delimitation policy make this area vulnerable to any possible outbreak of a conflict among different ethnic groups. Therefore, enhancing cooperation and mutual trust between the parties is a crucial task in order to provide stability and security in the region. The EU should better calculate its benefits and costs in designating its strategy in dealing with the region's conflicts. It can have a role to play as a model of economic and political cooperation, and can initiate some mechanisms that will lead a peaceful environment built with mutual trust and a sense of cooperation.

The EU has become more significant and attractive political actor around Europe and beyond with its economic power and has incrementally weighted its presence and interests over the solution for global concerns, such as world security, extreme poverty, environmental degradation, protection of minority rights. The EU's further involvement in global affairs as a

⁸⁵ Joseph V. Montville, *Interethnic Conflict: Theory and Practice*, Lexington Books, 2001, p.8

⁸⁶ Reha Yılmaz and Sezai Özçelik, "Çatışma Teorileri Işığında Gürcistan ve Karabağ Çatışmalarının Çözümlemesi", in Atilla Sandıklı (ed.) *Teoriler Işığında Güvenlik, Savaş, Barış ve Çatışma Çözümleri*, BİLGESAM Yayınları, 2012, p.287

⁸⁷ Ibid.

political actor has gained impetus with the establishment of an internal institutional policy framework which led to EU to present itself as a single political actor in world politics. Within the EU's own internal developments through institutional and legal arrangements, the EU has advanced its strength on its military and civilian assets as a responsible active political actor. However, the EU's stance on conflict prevention and management was, and has still been, ambiguous since it has to define its role by sustaining its internal unity within the multiple-actor structure and find "its own space in an already crowded field".⁸⁸ The European foreign policy agenda has also clearly expanded after the end of the Cold War within a more interdependent and complex world structure, hence, Europe has confronted with new issues and old issues in a new form that raise many questions in its foreign policy analysis.⁸⁹

I.II. THE EU AS AN INTERNATIONAL ACTOR AFTER THE COLD WAR

The dissolution of the Soviet Union closed a long period in which a single major international conflict dominated the international system; however, this closure unleashed also the long suppressed internal unrests within nations. Internal conflicts, ethnic-secessionist conflicts and conflicts over power struggles within the national system were released and began to dominate the international conflict agenda. As Zartman explains:

"Conflicts arose from deep rooted antagonism that had lain in dormant or been held in check by the balance of power. Such antagonisms rise and fall according to external conditions. When national system of order break down, people fall back on ethnic or confessional identities that may exclude others with whom they formerly lived in harmony."⁹⁰

After the removal of a common threat, focal points of security perception became multidimensional as in the confrontations occurred in the international system. This radical change has also reflected to the discourses of scholars and in conflict studies' researchers.

⁸⁸ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, "The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution", *MIRICO Report: Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.13

⁸⁹ Brian White, "Foreign Policy Analysis and European Foreign Policy", in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.), *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, p.57

⁹⁰ William Zartman, "Introduction: Toward the Resolution of International Conflict", in I. William Zartman (ed.), *Peacemaking in International Conflict*, United States Institute of Peace: Washington, 2007, p.4

Most international and regional organizations, like the OSCE, NATO, EU, UN, redefined their goals and began to set up new units by funding conflict prevention and resolution initiatives on a larger scale. To manage conflicts among nations was a familiar theme in the international relations literature; however, it was a challenge to the intergovernmental international organizations to manage these newly emerging non-state conflicts which occurred unexpectedly within a very short time.⁹¹

The traditional foreign policy analysis which concentrates on the state (realist perspective in an anarchic international system) and considers the state as the sole actor in the international area has also been challenged with the introduction of new interpretations and changed perspectives in analyzing the new world order after the Cold War. Brian White analyzes the EU's global role by concentrating on "the impact of the Union" on world politics beyond the limited definitions and patterns of the traditional foreign policy analysis. He argues that existing traditional approaches to understanding the Europe's global role is not sufficient to comprehend the EU's complex system which contains both intergovernmental and supranational features, therefore, the traditional understanding of "the EU as foreign policy actor" approach is limited in some ways.⁹² He asserts that for a more appropriate analysis of the EU's foreign policy firstly, it should be primarily concentrated on the outcome rather than policy evolution process; and secondly the EU should be considered as a non-unitary/disaggregated entity in the world politics.⁹³

Bretherton and Vogler analyze the evolution of the EU's foreign policy through a social constructivist perspective and evaluate its actorness as a "further demonstration of the dynamic processes through which intersubjective understandings evolve".⁹⁴ They argue that the EU has contributed to the formation of intersubjective international structure in which its role, responsibilities and limitations are also shaped accordingly.⁹⁵ They address the EU's actorness by focusing on the interacting processes of three notions; opportunity, presence and capability.⁹⁶

In their analysis, "opportunity" simply refers to "the external environment of ideas and events which constrain or enable actorness", namely the external conditions which have

⁹¹ Oliver Ramsbotham Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011, pp.4-5

⁹² Brian White, "Foreign Policy Analysis and European Foreign Policy", in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.) *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, pp.45-61

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.46

⁹⁴ Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, London: Routledge, 2006, p.22

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.23

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.24-36

determining effects over the EU's action or inaction.⁹⁷ "Presence" denotes the EU's ability "to exert influence beyond its borders".⁹⁸ Presence combines two sets of factors which are; first, character and identity of the EU; and second, "the unanticipated or unintended consequences of the Union's internal priorities and policies".⁹⁹ As Bretherton and Vogler explain: "the relationship between the EU's presence and actorness can be relatively direct, in that EU internal policy initiatives may generate responses from affected/aggrieved third parties which, in turn, necessitate action by the EU."¹⁰⁰ This means that the EU's internal policy preferences have crucial effects over external events, to which the Union, in turn, has to react. In terms of "capability", Bretherton and Vogler refer to "the availability of policy instruments and understandings about the Union's ability to utilize these instruments, in response to opportunity and/or to capitalize on presence".¹⁰¹ They define an actor "as an entity that is capable of agency; of formulating and acting upon decisions".¹⁰² The EU's actorness, therefore, is mostly related to its capability to formulate effective policies and to the availability of the appropriate instruments in forming and controlling its external actions.¹⁰³ At that point, it is crucial for the EU to utilize all necessary tools, at its disposal, in responding external events.

The impact of the EU's external actions on international events determines the scope and acceptance of the EU as an international actor. The EU needs to be in interaction with other players and get their recognition as an international actor. According to Waever, the EU's foreign and security policy is closely related with "identity factor"; and his identity argument has two directions.¹⁰⁴ The first and the most common one is the cultural aspect (which concludes that the Europeans are not much alike, so they have to create more commonness in order to integrate more); and the second one is more about the recognition of a European identity in order to acquire its existence.¹⁰⁵

"... the identity of a political entity should not be thought of as stemming from its members alike. Its identity gets ascribed on the international scene; it is recognized as

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.24

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.24

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.27

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.27

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.24

¹⁰² Ibid. p.35

¹⁰³ Ibid. p.29

¹⁰⁴ Ole Waever, "The EU as a Security Actor: Reflections from a Pessimistic Constructivist on Post-Sovereign Security Orders", in Morten Kelstrup, Michael Williams and Michael Charles Williams (eds.), *International Relations Theory and European Integration: Power, Security and Community*, Routledge, 2000, pp.281-282

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp.281-282

someone by others as an actor, by acting it gets identity ‘from without’ instead of ‘from within’.”¹⁰⁶

Within these terms, the EU’s identity problem in the international scene is generally linked with the existence problem of its common foreign and security policy. “Foreign and security policy are increasingly relevant as an identity factor. European identity will come not from cultural homogenization, but from international action, being recognized by others.”¹⁰⁷

On the other hand, Christopher Hill, following Sjöstedt, defines an international actor as:

“... an entity which is (1) delimited from others and from its environment, which is (2) autonomous, in the sense of making its own laws and decisions and which is (3) possess certain structural prerequisites for action on the international level, such as legal personality, a set of democratic agents and the capability to conduct negotiations with third parties.”¹⁰⁸

Caporoso and Jupille’s analysis for evaluating the EU’s capacity in international environmental affairs as an actor provides similar, general criteria that the EU needs to fulfill in order to be considered as an international actor.

“... the EU needs recognition (outsiders’ acceptance of EU competence); authority (the legal competence to act); autonomy (distinctiveness and independence from other actors); and cohesion (the extent to which it acts in a unitary way externally).”¹⁰⁹

All these criteria are valid to identify an international actor. The EU seems to fulfill many of these criteria, however, the perception of other international actors have crucial significance over the determination of the EU’s actorness in world affairs. Larsen explains the “EU as an international actor” approach as follows: “according to this approach (a discourse approach), the Union is an international actor if it constructs itself as one vis-a-vis the rest of the world and if other international actors conceive of it as such.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.281

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.281

¹⁰⁸ Christopher Hill, “Capability-Expectation Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe’s International Role”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.31 No.3, September 1993, p.309

¹⁰⁹ Roy H. Ginsberg, “Conceptualising The European Union as an International Actor: Narrowing the Theoretical Capability-Expectation Gap”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.37 No.3, September 1999, p.447

¹¹⁰ Henrik Larsen, “Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy”, in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.) *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.p.69

The EU's autonomy and its capacity to act collectively in high politics have been limited although it has some institutional capabilities.¹¹¹ It is because of the lack of common perspective and the Member States' differentiated priorities that the EU cannot sometimes act on a common problem.¹¹²

The scope and dimension of the foreign policy concept has also changed within a more interdependent and complex world system. Sjursen and Smith also draw attention to the intertwined structure of both domestic and foreign policies; and defend that the internal justification would shape and reflects the external justification and acceptance of the EU's foreign policy.¹¹³

As Hill defines, "an actor can [...] should find for itself something approximating to a part played on a stage, namely a distinctive high-profile and coherent identity".¹¹⁴ However, the EU is still faced with the problematic choice whether it will follow "Franco-German European integrationist route" or "the more intergovernmental [British] route" for future of the Union.¹¹⁵ The Union's actions and developments have demonstrated that Member States have preferred to rely on their national interests when the issues on high politics are on the agenda.¹¹⁶ These tendencies have diminished unitary action and cohesion among Member States and lessened the EU's effectiveness on high politics issues in global events.

The political problems of the Union in the CFSP issues became apparent in the reluctance of the Member States to play more active role in complex international events. This situation affects the process of decision taking, and, consequently, the implementation problems occur.

"... there is a tension between external demands that the EU should play an active role in the international system and reluctance on the part of Member State governments to accord competence to the EC in areas considered sensitive domestically."¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Roy H. Ginsberg, "Conceptualising The European Union as an International Actor: Narrowing the Theoretical Capability-Expectation Gap", *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.37 No.3, September 1999, p.447

¹¹² Ibid., p.447

¹¹³ Helene Sjursen and Karen E. Smith, "Justifying EU Foreign Policy: The Logics Underpinning EU Enlargement", *ARENA Working Paper* WP 01/1, 2001

¹¹⁴ Christopher Hill, "Capability-Expectation Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role", *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.31 No.3, September 1993, p.307

¹¹⁵ Trevor Salmon, "United in its Diversity (or Disunited in Adversary): That is the Question for the European Union and the European Security and Defence Policy", *Perspectives on European Politics and Security* Vol.5 No.3, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden The Netherlands, 2004, pp.447-468

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp.447-468

¹¹⁷ Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, London: Routledge, 2006, p.15

Furthermore, as long as the Member States continue to act on their own rather than through the Union and take the responsibility for key external policies and actions, the EU's capacity to act will be damaged in the eye of the other international actors; and its international role will be diminished.¹¹⁸ As Hill argues, "true actorness requires not only a clear identity and a self-contained decision-making system, but also the practical capabilities to have effective policies."¹¹⁹

Therefore, the EU's actions in the international scene and its impact over the other international actors would have proportionally contributed to the perception of the EU as a coherent, single actor in world politics. As Larsen summarized, the sum of the political practices of the EU in different policy fields constitutes the Union as an international actor.¹²⁰

Roy Ginsberg defines European foreign policy as "the process of integrated policies and actions of the Member States".¹²¹ At that point, the EU's all actions and decisions, either active or even passive, have somehow, to some degree, consequences over the other actors' foreign policy preferences, states or other international organizations. Whether the EU's foreign policy is considered as insufficient or ineffective or is not placed in a desirable process, this tangible effect over the other players in the world politics cannot be denied or underestimated while assessing the EU's foreign policy. Sjursen and Smith also focus the "existentialist dilemma" and develop the justifying elements that would enhance the EU's foreign policy and its actorness in global affairs by evaluating to its soft power features and moral duties.¹²²

"An actor is considered to be rational if he/she is capable of explaining and justifying his or her reasons for making a particular policy choice. These reasons could be material gain, but they could also be a sense of what is appropriate given an actor's role or duties or what is right given universal standards of justice. This expansion of the possible *raison d'être* of the EU's foreign policy seems all the more reasonable

¹¹⁸ Carolyn Rhodes (ed.), *The European Union in the World Community*, Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998, cited in Roy H. Ginsberg, "Conceptualising The European Union as an International Actor: Narrowing the Theoretical Capability-Expectation Gap", *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.37 No.3, September 1999, p.447

¹¹⁹ Christopher Hill (ed.), *The Actors in Europe's Foreign Policy*, London: Routledge, 1996, cited in Roy H. Ginsberg, "Conceptualising The European Union as an International Actor: Narrowing the Theoretical Capability-Expectation Gap", *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.37 No.3, September 1999, pp.447-448

¹²⁰ Henrik Larsen, "Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy", in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.) *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, p.70

¹²¹ Roy Ginsberg, "Foreign Policy Action of the European Community: The Politics of Scale", Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989, cited in Brian White, "Foreign Policy Analysis and European Foreign Policy", in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.) *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, p.53

¹²² Helene Sjursen and Karen E. Smith, "Justifying EU Foreign Policy: The Logics Underpinning EU Enlargement", *ARENA Working Paper* WP 01/1, 2001

bearing in mind that national foreign policies do not seem to suffer from the same 'existentialist dilemmas' when they fail to obtain their objectives. For example, if United States foreign policy is ineffective, we do not conclude that it is non-existent. This suggests that also here there are other elements that help to justify their existence.”¹²³

For that reason, a more comprehensive approach should be adopted in assessing the EU's role as an international actor, especially with the introduction of wider security concerns in the new era. In 2003 European Security Strategy, the EU committed itself becoming an effective and credible regional and global actor who shares the responsibility for enhancing global security and in building a better world.¹²⁴ In the ESS, in which key threats, such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure and organized crime were listed, the EU redefined its role with increased responsibilities and duties in the world politics; to stand collectively against these threats. The EU emphasizes the importance of improving preventive mechanisms and better coordination among its members to be ready to act before a crisis occurs in order to tackle these more diverse, less visible and less predictable threats.¹²⁵

Broadening security concerns have compelled to adopt a more holistic and comprehensive approach towards more complex and interdependent security problems. On the other hand, there are many challenges that hinder the EU to act more decisively. As Zwolski indicates, although the holistic approach is important in analyzing the EU's role as an international security actor, it is also methodologically and conceptually difficult to attain that approach due to some challenges, such as different perceptions of security, or different scale for securitisation of an issue between Member States, or the lack of an overarching grand strategy which would provide the EU a better usage of its security instruments.¹²⁶

Due to the interlinked nature of the new security perceptions, these challenges need to be managed through a more comprehensive and holistic perspective. In this regard, the EU has been using the whole range of its political and economic tools while tackling security related issues. The ESS presents the EU's comprehensive and holistic approach in tackling current multi-dimensional, complex security problems by emphasizing the importance of the prevention of the conflicts before a crisis occurs. As indicated in the ESS, the EU has the

¹²³ Ibid., p.n/a

¹²⁴ Council of the European Union, A Secure Europe in a Better World European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Kamil Zwolski, “The EU as an International Security Actor After Lisbon: Finally a Green Light for a Holistic Approach”, *Cooperation and Conflict* Vol.47 No.1, 2012, pp.68-81

capacity to respond the multi-faceted situations by addressing the root causes, such as poverty, hunger or weak governance with its wide range of policy tools.¹²⁷

As Sjursen and Smith argue, the EU foreign policy should not be simply considered as restricted only to CFSP activities, but as a policy within a broader framework.¹²⁸ In that respect, they exemplify one of the most powerful tools of the EU to enhance stability and security in its vicinity as its enlargement policy. Although Commission-led enlargement policy is not directly in the realm of the CFSP, it has huge foreign policy impact.

“... (enlargement) is an example of the form of foreign policy that develops in a world where the domestic and international spheres have become increasingly intertwined. It should be stressed that enlargement is not a policy defined in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) pillar, but is an EU policy spanning the pillars. Thus, we do not consider the CFSP to be the exclusive foreign policy production ‘centre’ of the EU.”¹²⁹

Enlargement policy applied the CEEC’s after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, can be regarded as an important foreign policy tool for enhancing security and stability in the European continent. However, it raises considerable difficulties for the EU; in particular in terms of its institutional balance and the future distribution of resources among Member States, therefore it also raises the sensitive issue of inclusion or exclusion discussion which could create new dividing lines.¹³⁰

Also, the EU’s profile as an international security actor cannot be only explained by looking at its ESDP/ CSDP framework and military capabilities since the nature of the EU’s security policy is “multidimensional and well equipped to tackle contemporary security challenges in a comprehensive manner”.¹³¹ Zwolski argues that “CSDP does not present the entire image of the EU’s international security role; non-CSDP instruments and policies have to be included.”¹³²

¹²⁷ Council of the European Union, A Secure Europe in a Better World European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003, Brussels, 12 December 2003

¹²⁸ Helene Sjursen and Karen E. Smith, “Justifying EU Foreign Policy: The Logics Underpinning EU Enlargement”, *ARENA Working Paper* WP 01/1, 2001

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Helene Sjursen, “Missed Opportunity or Eternal Fantasy? The Idea of European Security and Defence Policy”, in John Peterson and Helene Sjursen (eds.), *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe*, New York: Routledge, 1998, p.98

¹³¹ Kamil Zwolski, “The EU as an International Security Actor After Lisbon: Finally a Green Light for a Holistic Approach”, *Cooperation and Conflict* Vol.47 No.1, 2012, p.69

¹³² Ibid., p.75

“The EU pursues its security objectives through integration and enlargement, promotion of liberal values, promotion of sustainable development, effective multilateralism and strengthening international law. These objectives are pursued by the EU through a variety of economic, political and recently also civilian and military CSDP means.”¹³³

The financial and assistance instruments have also provided interlinked benefits; and allow the EU to respond rapidly to crisis situations along with longer-term, capacity building projects.¹³⁴ This would also strengthen the “more accurate image of the EU as an international security actor”.¹³⁵

The EU can be considered as a historically important figure which provides security, stability and prosperity all around Europe. In that context, “it can be seen as the embodiment of the cooperative approach to security encouraged by the new European security agenda.”¹³⁶ As Sjursen indicates “the EU contributes to the maintenance of security not only among its Member States but also in the rest of Europe, through the increasingly dense network of agreements with third countries, as well as through its enlargement policy”.¹³⁷

Waever argues that, in the framework of securitization theory, the EU is considered as a security actor, because it securitizes issues by “telling stories”, as integration versus fragmentation or against the threats from the Europe’s own past.¹³⁸ He also defends that there is a close relationship between integration process and security; and although the EU is not considered as a security organization, indeed, it is actually the most important one, namely, not because of the activities derived from the CFSP realm, but because of its integration process itself.¹³⁹ He states that “the EU could be seen as yet another instance of the most well-tried method of peace provision in history.”¹⁴⁰

Waever categorizes the EU’s role for security and stability of Europe under three general perspectives as;

¹³³ Ibid., p.75

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.75

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.80

¹³⁶ Helene Sjursen, “Missed Opportunity or Eternal Fantasy? The Idea of European Security and Defence Policy”, in John Peterson and Helene Sjursen (eds.), *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe*, New York: Routledge, 1998, p.97

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp.97-98

¹³⁸ Ole Waever, “The EU as a Security Actor: Reflections from a Pessimistic Constructivist on Post-Sovereign Security Orders”, in Morten Kelstrup, Michael Williams and Michael Charles Williams (eds.), *International Relations Theory and European Integration: Power, Security and Community*, Routledge, 2000, p.278

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp.260-264

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.264

“1) The primary function of keeping the core intact, ensuring there is one centre rather than several in Western Europe; 2) silent disciplining power on the “near abroad”; the magnetism working already in East Central Europe; 3) a potential role as direct intervenor in specific conflicts.”¹⁴¹

While the first function concentrates on the core, the second and the third ones are related to the EU’s effects over the close outsiders. In the second function, the EU is considered as the source of attraction and a power to hold the outsider in balance by acting as a “magnet”, as a model for the near abroad which has an impact over their domestic and foreign policies or developments.¹⁴² On the other hand, the third function denotes the direct contribution of the Union in the resolution of conflicts and reveals the possible potential capabilities of the Union as a security provider. However, the EU generally prefers to use its tools via the second function in dealing with conflicts. The second function reflects the EU’s stance in resolution of the neighbouring countries’ conflicts through spreading common values (democracy, the rule of law and human rights) which will, indirectly, lead to the peaceful settlement of the conflicts. Although the second function does not directly refer to conflict resolution, it contributes to the resolution process by reducing the possibility of conflict with the promotion of democratic values, and especially helps the resolution of ethnic disputes where some ethnic minorities are not given these rights.

Furthermore, the EU’s security culture has, historically, been based on political and economic balance and stability rather than merely military assets and capabilities. Whilst Duchene’s definition of ‘civilian power’ explains the softer approach of the EU’s unique role and envisages the EU as a model of reconciliation and peace¹⁴³, similarly Twitchett’s definition illustrates the EU as “an actor that has no military dimension, but is able to influence other international actors through diplomatic, economic and legal means”.¹⁴⁴ The discourse on the EU’s civilian foreign policy action has still a remarkable reflection on the perception of the EU as an actor by others.

Although the soft power of the EU is not denied, there is another discussion about the importance of having military capabilities and assets in terms of being an effective

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.260

¹⁴² Ibid., p.261

¹⁴³ François Duchene, “Europe’s Role in World Peace”, in Richard J. Mayne (ed.), *European Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, London: Fontana, 1972 and François Duchene, “Europe’s Role in the International System”, in Max Kohnstamm, Wolfgang Hager (eds.), *A Nation Writ Large*, London: Macmillan, 1973, cited in Roy H. Ginsberg, “Conceptualising The European Union as an International Actor: Narrowing the Theoretical Capability-Expectation Gap”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.37 No.3, September 1999, p.445

¹⁴⁴ Kenneth J. Twitchett (ed.), *Europe and the World*, London: Europa, 1976, p.8, cited in Roy H. Ginsberg, “Conceptualising The European Union as an International Actor: Narrowing the Theoretical Capability-Expectation Gap”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.37 No.3, September 1999, p.445

international actor. Even though, the realist view on foreign policy analysis has been challenged with the emergence of new dynamics and concepts¹⁴⁵, military strength and capabilities are still considered as crucial, determining factor in shaping or affecting the international events.

“... distribution of military strength is still a formidable factor in determining outcome, (that) has correspondingly damaged the Community’s image as a powerful and progressive force in the reshaping of the international system.”¹⁴⁶

Hill considers that defense presents the key development for the EU to take place in world affairs; and argues that “if the Community (the EU) does develop a military dimension, it will have taken an immense serious step towards transforming itself as an international actor and in consequence also the external attitude towards it.”¹⁴⁷ From 1998, the dominant civilian power discourse has been challenged by the view that the Union’s access to the military means might contribute to international peace and stability.¹⁴⁸ Having military capabilities seems to deter against other players; however, unless it is supplemented with an overall and consistent strategy applied in unison, then it would only theoretically strength the EU’s vision in the eye of the other actors.

Security belongs to the sphere of handling challenges and avoiding the worst; and as Waever states “in a field like security, one has to make choices and deal with challenges and risks that one confronts”.¹⁴⁹ Waever considers the acceleration of defense cooperation after the Kosovo war as a crucial part of the construction of an EU identity project; however, he also specifies that rather than the number of deployed men, the efforts and talks along the way will help the EU to constitute itself as an international actor which is “responsible, blamable and the one that makes a difference”.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, if the EU aims to assume a greater role in the international arena as a responsible and powerful security actor, it has to develop an overall strategy and take more concrete actions with precise decisions.

¹⁴⁵ Brian White, “Foreign Policy Analysis and European Foreign Policy”, in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.) *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, pp.45-61

¹⁴⁶ Christopher Hill, “The Capability-Expectation Gap, or Conceptionalizing Europe’s International Role”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol.31 No.3, September 1993, p.306

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.318

¹⁴⁸ Henrik Larsen, “Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy”, in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.) *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, pp.71-72

¹⁴⁹ Ole Waever, “The EU as a Security Actor: Reflections from a Pessimistic Constructivist on Post-Sovereign Security Orders”, in Morten Kelstrup, Michael Williams and Michael Charles Williams (eds.), *International Relations Theory and European Integration: Power, Security and Community*, Routledge, 2000, p.284

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.282

Throughout time, the EU has extended its access to partial military means; however, the original formulation of the Union as a civilian power which emphasizes persuasion, still remains in the Union's conceptualization of its foreign policy actions.¹⁵¹ Although these new articulations of both civilian and military assets on the EU's actorness paved way to re-consideration in European foreign analysis, the civilian aspect of the EU's foreign policy still prevails.

The creation of the CFSP, and then the ESDP, targets to give the EU a stronger role in international affairs. All improvements were designed to strengthen the EU's vision and enhance its capabilities as a responsible international actor on security related issues. Mainly in the field of conflict prevention and resolution, the EU has improved its civilian and military capabilities and strengthened its vision as a security actor.

“A number of treaty changes boosted the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and paved the way for a military component, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Since the 2001 Swedish Presidency, there has been a major increase in the EU's awareness of the importance of conflict prevention and on the need to develop policies that tackle the root causes of violent conflicts.”¹⁵²

Despite the EU's ability to influence European stability and security through economic and political means, the EU has also sought to expand its scope into security and defense capabilities within an autonomous and independent structure, especially apart from NATO's capabilities. The ability of the EU to act more autonomously in the security and defense realm with a coherent and independent capability is seen as a “fundamental component of the EU's political identity”.¹⁵³ Therefore, the EU sought to develop its capabilities in order to be more coherent, more active and more independent actor which has more political weight in international affairs.

¹⁵¹ Henrik Larsen, “Discourse Analysis in the Study of European Foreign Policy”, in Ben Tonra and Thomas Christiansen (eds.) *Rethinking European Union Foreign Policy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004.p.71

¹⁵² Fraser Cameron, “The European Union and Conflict Prevention”, *Background Paper Prepared for the Project*, United Nation Institute for Disarmament Research, 2003, p.10

¹⁵³ Hans van den Broek, *Speech to East-West Institute*, Brussels, 1 December 1995, cited in Helene Sjursen, “Missed Opportunity or Eternal Fantasy? The Idea of European Security and Defence Policy”, in John Peterson and Helene Sjursen (eds.), *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe*, New York: Routledge, 1998, pp.98-99

I.III. THE EU'S CONFLICT PREVENTION MECHANISMS AND CAPABILITIES

The increased effectiveness and capabilities of the EU has affected its perception as a capable international actor in global affairs. The EU's role as an actor in conflict resolution and its contributions to conflict resolution in its vicinity has increased with the extended mechanisms and tools that it has developed throughout years. The developments and new initiatives in the realm of foreign policy have strengthened the EU's vision and its conflict prevention capabilities and strategies. The following section evaluates the EU's foreign policy mechanisms, tools, and capabilities. It also looks into the history of the EU's foreign policy in order to comprehend the evolution of the EU's efforts and capabilities in conflict resolution.

I.III.I. THE EU'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONFLICTS

The EU's role in enhancing peace in the international arena has been growing through new initiatives taken within the Union's own internal and external policies. Strengthened CFSP and ESDP capacity for implementing EU foreign policy in a more coherent and effective manner would enhance the EU's role in international issues.

In this section, the origin and development of the EU's foreign policy are evaluated in order to comprehend the background of the Union's capabilities and foreign policy implementations. A brief historical overview is made to clarify the evolution of the EU's conflict prevention mechanisms and capabilities. The European Neighbourhood Policy is analyzed in a detailed way in order to understand the main strategy and policy objectives of the EU's involvement in the resolution of neighbouring conflicts. The origin and development of this policy along with its strengths and weaknesses are scrutinized in order to see whether it is adequate and effective in responding to the security challenges in the Union's vicinity.

I.III.I.I. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE EU'S FOREIGN POLICY

The EU has a successful internal history of resolving conflicts through long-term cooperation and economic integration. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the precursor of today's EU, was "born out of the need for institutionalized relations between European states to allow for post-war economic construction" and political rehabilitation after the Second World War's destruction.¹⁵⁴ The EU can be seen as a successful peace project which exemplifies conflict resolution as a long-term project through economic integration and social learning on a permanent basis.

The political base of the Community, European Political Cooperation (EPC), was established by the Luxembourg Report in 1970 as a framework for a loose and voluntary collaboration between the EC members on foreign policy issues after a long debate about the form, function and advantages of creating a common political structure.¹⁵⁵ The EPC, which was created without a treaty basis, was gained its treaty base with the Single European Act. In the Single European Act it was stated: "[Member States] shall endeavor jointly to formulate and implement a European foreign policy".¹⁵⁶ With the Maastricht Treaty, the EPC was institutionalized under the second pillar of the EU as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 1992.¹⁵⁷ The CFSP has a mainly intergovernmental structure of decision-making and reflects the Member States' sensibilities on security and foreign policy related issues.

In the Maastricht Treaty, the EU specified its foreign policy objectives as promoting international cooperation; developing and consolidating democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights; and preserving peace and strengthening international security.¹⁵⁸ There were strong expectations from the EU's objectives which could not be met only relying on its economic capabilities. To back up the EU's power on international area, the EU decided

¹⁵⁴ Emma J. Stewart, *The European Union and Conflict Prevention: Policy Evolution and Outcome*, London: Transaction Publishers, 2006, pp.41-43

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.44-45

¹⁵⁶ European Commission, Single European Act, Luxembourg, 17 February 1986

¹⁵⁷ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, "The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution", *MIRICO Report: Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, pp.16-17

¹⁵⁸ Treaty of Maastricht, 29 July 1992

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/11992M/htm/11992M.html>, accessed on 06.02.2013

to improve its political and military capabilities rather than relying on a UN backed response or the political and military strength of the US in bringing the conflicts to an end.¹⁵⁹

The 1999 Amsterdam Treaty brought a number of innovations in the Union's foreign and security policy realm; namely, the establishment of policy planning and early warning unit, the High Representative for the CFSP, constructive abstention, enhanced cooperation and common strategies.¹⁶⁰ These developments and innovations had important contributions to the Union's capabilities; decision-making structure and action in crisis situations. In the Treaty of Amsterdam, policy planning and early warning unit were established in the General Secretariat of the Council under the responsibility of its High Representative for the CFSP.¹⁶¹ This unit was especially significant for the equipping the EU with the capability to act proactively in crisis/conflict situations. The post of the High Representative for the CFSP was created to assist the Council in formulating, preparing and implementing of a policy decision.¹⁶² Additionally, the European Council authorized to decide common strategies which will be implemented in areas "where the Member States have important interests in common."¹⁶³ These have so far been important tools in the EU's conflict prevention efforts.

In the Amsterdam Treaty, the EU also included Western European Union's (WEU) Petersberg tasks to improve their military based capabilities. By including the so-called Petersberg tasks, which originated in 1992 the Ministerial Council of the Western European Union, the Treaty of Amsterdam, therefore, has expanded the tasks of the Union to "humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks, task of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking" in order to make available military units for tasks conducted under WEU authority.¹⁶⁴ This has provided the EU to have "operational capability"¹⁶⁵; enabling it to develop a capability in the future to act more autonomously and timely when a crisis unfolds. Amsterdam Treaty stated that, the EU would "avail itself of the WEU to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defense

¹⁵⁹ Georgi Kamov, "EU's role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas", Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, pp.16-17

¹⁶⁰ Treaty of Amsterdam, 10 November 1997,

<http://eurlex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/11997D/htm/11997D.html#0132020023>, accessed on 02.04.2012

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Stefan Wolff and Annemarie Peen Rodt, "Lessons From the Balkans: The ENP as a Possible Conflict Management Tool?", in Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.116

¹⁶⁵ Treaty of Amsterdam, 10 November 1997,

<http://eurlex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/11997D/htm/11997D.html#0132020023>, accessed on 06.02.2013

implications.”¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the mechanisms of “enhanced cooperation” and “constructive abstention” were introduced to make the EU take quicker action without confronting major disagreements, especially in the case of response to conflicts.

An important turning point came out in 1998 when British foreign policy changed and the Blair government declared its support for a more independent security role for the EU.¹⁶⁷ The Franco-British St. Malo declaration in 1998 stressed the importance of developing an autonomous European defence capability “backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises.”¹⁶⁸ The discussions about developing an autonomous and capable security and defence structure had continued. Afterwards, in 1999 the Cologne European Council decided that regarding the responsibilities that arouse from a common European policy on security and defence, the EU should develop its own necessary means and capabilities supported by military forces in order to respond international crises.¹⁶⁹ It was also concluded that the Union should be able to take decision and action “on the full range of conflict prevention and crisis management tasks defined in the Treaty on European Union, the ‘Petersberg tasks’.”¹⁷⁰ Thus, European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) emerged with its wide range of military as well as civilian crisis management instruments.¹⁷¹ Hence, without duplicating or dismissing NATO, the EU would also be able to act autonomously in the field of conflict prevention and crisis management.¹⁷²

The European Council in Helsinki tracked the guidelines of the decisions made at the Cologne Council, and made further commitments for the military component of crisis management.¹⁷³ The Helsinki Headline Goal determined the capabilities and assets needed to be developed in order to facilitate fulfilling the Petersberg Tasks, which would enable the EU

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Helene Sjursen, “Making Sense-or not-of the EU’s External Policy”, in Elisabeth Davidson, Arita Eriksson and Jan Hallenberg (eds.), *Europeanization of Security and Defence Policy*, A Conference held at Swedish National Defence College, 5 December 2001, p.33

¹⁶⁸ Joint Declaration Issued at the British-French Summit, Saint-Malo, France, 3-4 December 1998, source: EU Institute for Security Studies, February 2000

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/French-British%20Summit%20Declaration,%20Saint-Malo,%201998%20-%20EN.pdf>, accessed on 06.02.2013

¹⁶⁹ Presidency Conclusion, Cologne European Council, 3-4 June 1999

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/kolnen.htm, accessed on 06.02.2012

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Jolyon Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.6-16

¹⁷² Georgi Kamov, “EU’s Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas”, Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, p.17

¹⁷³ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, “The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution”, *MIRICO Report: Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.17

to gather 50.000-60.000 military personnel; deployable within 60 days and sustainable up to 12 months.¹⁷⁴ These forces should be rapidly deployable, sustainable and ready to act within a short time.¹⁷⁵

A series of European Council decisions brought further developments of the EU's crisis management and conflict prevention capabilities. Another improvement was declared in 2000 Feira European Council in which signified the EU's priority areas in the civilian crisis management capabilities. Feira Headline Goals determined mainly four priority areas: deployment of police forces for conflict prevention and crisis management, experts to strengthen the rule of law, social protection, and civilian administration.¹⁷⁶ Significantly on conflict prevention, the 2001 Göteborg European Council conclusions clarified the EU's improvements on conflict prevention mechanisms and strategies. The Council acknowledged "EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict" which improved the Union's coherence and capabilities in the conflict prevention field and admitted that conflict prevention was one of the main objectives; therefore, it "should be integrated in all its relevant aspects".¹⁷⁷ This "ambitious programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict" emphasized mainly four key priorities.¹⁷⁸

"a) Setting clear political priorities for preventive actions. The Commission and the Council should cooperate more closely on conflict prevention: the Commission should provide assistance for monitoring potential conflict issues at the beginning of each Presidency and should also strengthen the conflict prevention content of its country strategy paper.

b) Improving the EU's early warning, actions and policy coherence: To achieve this aim, there should be greater input (intelligence, assessments, political reporting) from Member States into the EU institutions.

c) Enhancing the EU's instruments for long-lasting and short term prevention: All relevant EU institutions should mainstream conflict prevention in their areas of competence

¹⁷⁴ Presidency Conclusion, Helsinki European Council, 10-11 December 1999
http://europa.eu.int/council/off/conclu/dec99/dec99_en.htm, accessed on 02.04.2012

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Presidency Conclusion, Santa Maria Da Feira European Council, 19-20 June 2000
http://ue.eu.int/ue.Docs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00200r1.en0.htm, accessed on 02.04.2012

¹⁷⁷ European Council, Göteborg European Council, Presidency Conclusion, Göteborg, 15-16 June 2001
http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/background/docs/goteborg_concl_en.pdf, accessed on 05.02.2013

¹⁷⁸ Fraser Cameron, "The European Union and Conflict Prevention", *Background Paper Prepared for the Project*, United Nation Institute for Disarmament Research, 2003, pp.10-13

d) Building effective partnership for prevention: the EU should intensify its cooperation and exchange of information with the other relevant global institutions (UN, OSECE, NATO), as well as with regional organizations.”¹⁷⁹

The Göteborg Conclusions have had crucial contributions to the historical development of the EU’s conflict resolution, prevention, management strategies and actions. In the framework of this programme, the EU agreed on to give priority to the improvement of “effectiveness and coherence of its external action in the field of conflict prevention, thereby also enhancing the preventive capabilities of the international community at large.”¹⁸⁰

The creation of a Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) has also been an important contribution as it aimed to enable the EU “to respond in a rapid, efficient and flexible manner, to situations of urgency or crisis or to the emergence of crisis”.¹⁸¹ RRM was created with the aim of supporting the Union’s crisis management capabilities with “coherent, complementary and effective actions” under the Commission responsibility.¹⁸²

The Lisbon Treaty has also brought some key innovations in the Union’s institutional structures and decision-making procedures in order to minimize the coordination and coherence problems rooted from the Union’s pillar structure. The Lisbon Treaty gave the Union a “legal personality” in the international arena.¹⁸³ The Lisbon Treaty also aimed to bring more coherence and cooperation between the Commission and Council in order to facilitate the decision-making processes and to strengthen collective action, mainly on security and defence issues with the introduction of new mechanisms; i.e., the creation of the post of a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR), and the establishment of European External Action Service (EEAS) to assist the High

¹⁷⁹ Fraser Cameron, “The European Neighbourhood Policy as a Conflict Prevention Tool”, A European Policy Centre-Conflict Prevention Partnership Publication, 2006, pp.9-10

¹⁸⁰ European Council, EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts, 7 June 2001 http://www.eplo.org/assets/files/3.%20Resources/EU%20Documents/EU_EU_Programme_for_the_Prevention_of_Violent_Conflicts.pdf, accessed on 05.02.2013

¹⁸¹ European Council, Council Regulation (EC) No.381/2001 of 26 February 2001 Creating a Rapid-Reaction Mechanism <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2001:057:0005:0009:EN:PDF>, accessed on 06.02.2013

¹⁸² Official website of the European Union, Rapid-Reaction Mechanism http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/other/r12701_en.htm, accessed on 07.02.2013

¹⁸³ Treaty of Lisbon, Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community, 2007/C 306/01, 17.12.2007 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:FULL:EN:PDF>, accessed on 08.02.2013

Representative.¹⁸⁴ However, neither the Commission's nor the Parliament's competence in the sensitive CFSP issues has been extended.¹⁸⁵ In a way, the Commission's right to submit proposal to the Council passed to the new HR, who "partly presents the Commission" and act under Council mandate.¹⁸⁶ Significantly, related to the Union's security and defence capabilities, in the Treaty of Lisbon, it is decided that the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP which replaced the ESDP), which will lead to a common defence, should be "an integral part of the common foreign and security policy."¹⁸⁷ Thereby, the Union will have the "operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets" and resort to them in the case of crisis outside the Union's borders for prevention of conflicts and promotion of international security.¹⁸⁸

In the historical development of the Union's capabilities and policy tools in the realm of conflict prevention/management, the lessons taken from the Balkan wars have also had an important role because they have affected the EU's approach to conflict management in general, and led to the creation of new institutional forms for a broader approach to conflict prevention/management beyond its borders, including the ENP area.¹⁸⁹ The Yugoslav crisis in the 1990s and the Kosova war made the EU more aware of the necessity to develop its own crisis management capabilities in order to become an autonomous and capable actor.¹⁹⁰

"The failed attempt to handle the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990's, were [...] the first real push for European foreign policy-makers more actively seek to develop a common EU approach to dealing with violent ethnic conflict in the Union's near abroad... After NATO came to rescue of the EU over Kosova for the second time in 1999, the EU was eager to develop its own crisis management capabilities."¹⁹¹

In the context of conflict prevention capabilities and crisis management strategies, the EU's relatively new initiative, the ENP, has further provided a framework for the Union's involvement in the conflict in its vicinity; albeit indirectly. In this regard, the ENP offers

¹⁸⁴ Sophie Dagand, "The Impact of the Lisbon Treaty on CFSP and ESDP", *European Security Review* No. 37, March 2008, pp.1-7

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.2-3

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., pp.2-3

¹⁸⁷ Treaty of Lisbon, Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community, 2007/C 306/01, 17.12.2007

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:FULL:EN:PDF>, accessed on 08.02.2013

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Stefan Wolff and Annemarie Peen Rodt, "Lessons From the Balkans: The ENP as a Possible Conflict Management Tool?", in Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.113-131

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.113

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.113

additional foreign policy instruments aimed at influencing conflict prevention by enhancing political dialogue with partners, increasing sectoral cooperation, and stabilizing the countries' domestic structures through financial assistance programmes. In this respect, the ENP initiatives can be regarded as an important policy tool to deal with the neighbouring countries' conflicts.¹⁹²

I.III.I.II. EU'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE POST-COLD WAR CONFLICTS

The last enlargement process brought the EU, geographically closer to a number of frozen and violent conflicts. Thus, EU foreign policy makers frequently stress the importance of managing these conflicts for the Union's own security. The EU's intention to take a greater role on these issues can be clearly seen in the 2003 Security Strategy and at the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, firstly, Russia became an important external security concern, and still constitutes the main security concern, for the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) and Newly Independent States (NIS) due to its resources, size, political and economic practices.¹⁹³ Its geographical proximity and its foreign policy strategies raise serious concerns in its near abroad.¹⁹⁴ Secondly, border disputes and minority rights became an important security concern for these countries to manage their national stability.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, the EU's policy towards these countries has been conducted by mainly considering these two significant realities in the region.

The EU's decision to engage some conflicts can be explained through humanitarian concerns (Sudan, Congo), geopolitical drivers (Western Balkans, Moldova), commitment to alliances with the US (Iraq, Afghanistan), or external pressure and expectations for action (Afghanistan, Georgia).¹⁹⁶ As such in some cases, the EU chooses not to engage since the differences of Member States' priorities in their national foreign policy preferences lead them

¹⁹² Further information is given in the following section of this chapter.

¹⁹³ Carmen Stoian, "The Benefits and Limitations of European Union Membership as a Security Mechanism", *European Integration* Vol.29 No.2, May 2007, pp.192-194

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.192-194

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp.192-194

¹⁹⁶ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.5

to act reluctantly to take more decisive action.¹⁹⁷ The lack of political solidarity and convergence of the EU Member States' interests lead the EU to a deadlock on taking more concrete action to end human suffering in some conflicts. As Tocci states, the most problematic issue is "the EU's inability to act rapidly and cohesively and its limited capabilities in the security and defence realm" and this is related with the Union's "inability to forge consensus between Member States and Member States' unwillingness to devolve sovereignty in the foreign policy realm".¹⁹⁸

Tocci categorizes the EU's strengths in terms of conflict prevention and crisis management under two general headlines: first as an actor, and second as a framework.¹⁹⁹ Tocci lists the EU's advantages to provide leverage in solving the entrenched secessionist conflicts around the Union, due to its proximity to those regions and its power of attraction.²⁰⁰ The EU framework might induce a transformed understanding of system of governance; of identity and citizenship; and of borders which might transform the underlying conditions of the conflict and evolve the process to a more cooperative manner, as in the case of the EU itself.²⁰¹

Change in the structure that gives rise to a conflict, in terms of parties' different perceptions and interpretations of their interests and their cost-benefit analysis is essential in peace efforts.²⁰² However, the sensitive issues, as identity, sovereignty or security, leave little room for compromise in negotiations due to their fragile and incompatible logics as seen in most ethno-political conflicts.²⁰³ The EU can induce a change in the perception of identity, sovereignty and borders, which are highly contested components of a conflict. The EU can contribute to resolution of conflicts through its multi-level framework of governance and

¹⁹⁷ Nicu Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International, 2009, pp.457-477

¹⁹⁸ Natalie Tocci, "The EU in Conflict Resolution", in Stefan Wolff and Christalla Yakinthou (eds.), *The EU in Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practice*, New York: Routledge, 2011

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., and Natalie Tocci, "Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor", *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004

²⁰⁰ Natalie Tocci, "Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor", *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.1

²⁰¹ Natalie Tocci, "The EU in Conflict Resolution", in Stefan Wolff and Christalla Yakinthou (eds.), *The EU in Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practice*, New York: Routledge, 2011

²⁰² Natalie Tocci, "Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor", *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.7

²⁰³ Ibid, p.9

transformative effect over the understanding of identity/citizenship and of borders.²⁰⁴ The EU framework might reduce the risk of an outbreak of a conflict, or facilitate peace process by introducing a supra-identity, as European identity and EU citizenship concept, or a multi-level government framework within a shared sovereignty structure through interdependent governance levels; therefore, minorities' search for independent sovereignty becomes "obsolete"²⁰⁵

"When ethno-political conflicts are marked by incompatible positions over state sovereignty and they are *either in the process of accession or have a realistic prospect of entering it*, the Union's multi-level framework of governance could raise the potential for win-win agreements."²⁰⁶

Tocci claims that the changes in the principal parties' perception that would pave the way a constructive environment for reaching a common solution can totally be achieved when/if: "they are either in the process of accession or have a realistic prospect of entering it".²⁰⁷ In the framework of neighbourhood policy, the vague wording in the policy context about the membership prospect limits the Union's possible contributions to the conflicts in these countries. The ENP countries may also be affected by the transformative power of the Union due to the conditionality attached to this policy, as in ENP Action Plans. However, since the prospect of membership is not clear and possible for the time being, the impact and the effectiveness of these limited and ambiguous processes hinder the Union's strength in conflict resolution in neighbourhood area.²⁰⁸

The Union, as an actor, can also generate some other incentives beyond its borders. Tocci classifies the EU's comparative advantages when compared to other states, international organizations or NGOs engaged in the peace processes as:

²⁰⁴ Natalie Tocci, "The EU in Conflict Resolution", Stefan Wolff and Christalla Yakinthou (eds.), *The EU in Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practice*, New York: Routledge, 2011

²⁰⁵ Ibid., and Natalie Tocci, "Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor", *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004

²⁰⁶ Natalie Tocci, "Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor", *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.8, (emphasis added)

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.8

²⁰⁸ See more on this below.

“... first the EU can deploy “policies of conditionality” in conflict resolution: i.e, the promise/threat or granting/infliction of a benefit/punishment in return for the fulfillment/violation of a predetermined condition... Second, the EU’s nature and its extensive contractual relationship with third states generate an EU propensity to induce conflict resolution through socialization... Finally, the EU can induce conflict resolution through the passive enforcement of rules and norms. Rather than highlighting the logic of reward and punishment through conditionality, this mode of EU action hinges on a system of rule-bound cooperation.”²⁰⁹

The policy of conditionality, positive or negative, is the most powerful tool of the EU in its foreign policy and it works well in conflict prevention and settlement as well. The EU’s emphasis on democracy, human rights and the rule of law in its conditionality has crucial effects on conflict resolution. Even though the policy of conditionality is a strategy that is not unique for the EU; the Union can offer additional and varied “set of benefits and punishments compared to other principal mediators”.²¹⁰ In order for conditionality to work efficiently, the parties should have an ultimate aim and an incentive to integrate more into the Union’s structure and/or the membership prospect should be on the table. Tocci indicates that this is the “core dilemma” in the ENP:

“Naturally, when full membership is an option, the EU’s political leverage on a conflict is higher than in cases where relations are based on association, partnership or financial assistance. This begs the question of whether the EU can significantly influence third states in conflicts that it cannot or does not wish to fully integrate. Indeed this is the core dilemma underlying the European Neighbourhood Policy, which was born precisely to find an alternative to full membership for aspirant EU members.”²¹¹

The “prospect of membership” is certainly considered as an essential driver for parties to settle their problems. As Tocci states: “progress along the stages of accession or additional benefits could be made directly conditional on peace-making”.²¹² Therefore, the conditional benefits may induce parties to search for a common approach in order to enhance relations with the EU. However, at that point, the carrot that the Union uses should be appealing and crucial for the parties’ policy preferences. Tocci indicates that the “subjective value of EU

²⁰⁹ Natalie Tocci, “The EU in Conflict Resolution”, in Stefan Wolff and Christalla Yakinthou (eds.), *The EU in Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practice*, New York: Routledge, 2011

²¹⁰ Ibid., p.n/a

²¹¹ Ibid., p.n/a

²¹² Natalie Tocci, “Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor”, *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.12

benefits” have crucial effects over the recipient countries’ perceptions about the benefits that the Union offers; i.e in the case of Georgia or Moldova where the European aspiration is highly in their policy preferences.²¹³

Another way for the EU to induce conflict resolution is through socialization. In the context of EU dialogue with third countries or through contractual relations, the EU induces socialization which leads to transformation of perceived interests and values.²¹⁴ Socialization can also happen through various mechanisms and programmes, such as technical and social programmes, or through educational and youth exchanges programmes under the ENP.²¹⁵

“Through participation in or close contact with the EU’s institutional framework, EU actors engage in dialogue, awareness raising, persuasion, argumentation, as well as shaming and denunciation vis-à-vis conflict parties. Conflict parties, in turn, may alter their beliefs, priorities and strategies in a manner conducive to conflict resolution.”²¹⁶

The EU can also induce conflict resolution “through the passive enforcement of rules and norms”.²¹⁷ The EU respects and prioritizes basic human rights and minority rights, and implements the fundamental international laws by internalizing them into its legally-binding *acquis*.²¹⁸ Hence, the EU would not tolerate any kind of violation or abuse of human rights, and third parties in their relations with the Union, are expected to pay attention to this embedded rule.²¹⁹

In general, the EU’s strength “as a framework for and as an actor in conflict resolution are rooted in its nature as an entity promoting rights, law and inter-state cooperation and integration”.²²⁰ As an actor, within the CFSP and ESDP, the EU engages in short and medium term actions in conflicts around its borders; i.e diplomatic efforts conducted by CFSP High Representative and the EU’s Special Representatives in conflict zones, or military and civilian operations within the framework of ESDP.²²¹ In the long-term actions, the EU prefers to

²¹³ Natalie Tocci, “The EU in Conflict Resolution”, in Stefan Wolff and Christalla Yakinthou (eds.), *The EU in Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practice*, New York: Routledge, 2011

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p.n/a

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid., p.n/a

²²¹ Ibid.

follow soft approach that will eventually lead to peaceful solution. For this aim, the EU provides technical assistance and aid to third parties through contractual agreements; i.e TACIS programme aiming at strengthening the rule of law, good governance, human rights and democracy in post-Soviet territories.²²²

As mentioned before, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia can be considered as the first real push for European foreign policy makers to take more responsibility to tackle these kinds of ethnic violent conflicts in the EU's near abroad. However, this was not an easy task to complete since many internal and external challenges had been standing in front of the EU. Moreover, the EU did not have adequate tools to contain the atrocities in Yugoslavia.²²³ However, this incident revealed one crucial reality. The Yugoslav war clearly showed that nationalist threats might affect Europe as a whole, leading to a vulnerable environment in which illicit arms, human and drugs trafficking or organized crime could prevail and the number of refugees increased.²²⁴ This spread fear and conflicts in the continent.²²⁵ After the Kosovo crisis, the EU became more determined to develop its own crisis management capabilities and enhance its role over settling problems within a more peaceful manner.²²⁶ The failure to prevent the Yugoslavian crisis revealed that the traditional paradigms of conflict prevention, management and resolution were inadequate to deal with the post-Cold War situation.²²⁷ At that time being, the EU was not completely ready to undertake such a big responsibility, however, the determination of the EU to become an active global player in its near abroad led the EU to use more ambitious discourses in terms of conflict prevention and crisis management capabilities.

After the dissolution of the Soviet system, the EU followed a “dual track policy” and applied different policies for NIS from those for the CEECs.²²⁸ This differentiated strategy led

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Stefan Wolff and Annemarie Peen Rodt, “Lessons From the Balkans: The ENP as a Possible Conflict Management Tool?”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010

²²⁴ Carmen Stoian, “The Benefits and Limitations of European Union Membership as a Security Mechanism”, *European Integration* Vol.29 No.2, May 2007, p.193

²²⁵ Ibid., p.193

²²⁶ Stefan Wolff and Annemarie Peen Rodt, “Lessons From the Balkans: The ENP as a Possible Conflict Management Tool?”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stefan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010

²²⁷ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, “The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution”, *MIRICO Report: Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.13

²²⁸ Stefan Ganzle, “The European Neighbourhood Policy: A Strategy for Security in Europe?”, in Stephan Ganzle and Allen G. Sens (eds.), *The Changing Politics of European Security*, New York: Palgrave, 2007, pp.111-114

to a different policy course applied in Eastern neighboring countries within the time.²²⁹ In the Balkans, the EU followed an initial stabilization process through Stabilization Pacts and introduced the Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAAs), which indeed eventually pave the way for an official membership process through increasing democratic values in the concerned countries.²³⁰ Europe Agreements were signed with the CEECs as the legal basis of their relations with the EU, and Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) were conducted with most of the NIS. The PCAs were less comprehensive and less ambitious, while Europe Agreements were concluded on a more asymmetrical and more conditional basis with the prospect of eventual membership in the Union.²³¹ These different membership and partnership also led to different outcomes in terms of conflict resolution.

The EU officials' declarations clearly reflect the EU's eagerness on assuming a greater role to promote security in its vicinity.²³² However, the EU was unable to reconcile the conflicting views of its members, not only what to do and how to do, but also on the nature of the problem.²³³ This inability caused hesitations about the EU's effectiveness, and led to the EU's perception "as an indecisive, inconsistent and effectively weak international actor".²³⁴ In the early 1990s, the Union was basically lacking the "political will of its Member States to act – and to act in unison".²³⁵ EU Member States' bilateral relations with third countries and their special interests have affected their decisions and limited the Union's ability to act in unison. The Yugoslav failure was, as Faucompret argues: "not only because [the EU] was unable but also unwilling to take the joint decisions required to stop the fighting".²³⁶ The outbreak of the

²²⁹ Ibid., pp.111-114

²³⁰ Natalie Tocci, "The EU in Conflict Resolution", in Stefan Wolff and Christalla Yakinthou (eds.), *The EU in Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practice*, New York: Routledge, 2011

²³¹ Stefan Ganzle, "The European Neighbourhood Policy: A Strategy for Security in Europe?", in Stephan Ganzle and Allen G. Sens (eds.), *The Changing Politics of European Security*, New York: Palgrave, 2007, pp.111-114

²³² Jacques Poos – the foreign minister Luxembourg which held the Rotating Presidency back then – announced: "If one problem can be solved by Europeans, it is the Yugoslav problem". Jacques Delors, European Commission President, claimed that "We do not interfere in American affairs; we hope that they will have enough respect not to interfere ours.", source n/a, cited in Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, "The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution", *MIRICO Report: Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, pp.13-14

²³³ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, "The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution", *MIRICO Report: Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.15

²³⁴ Ibid., p.15

²³⁵ Ibid., p.15

²³⁶ Faucompret, 2001, source n/a, cited in Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, "The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution", *MIRICO Report: Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.15

Kosovo crisis right after the Bosnian failure showed the EU's ineffectiveness in handling and preventing conflicts in the Western Balkans.²³⁷

The enlarged EU with its new borders has faced new challenges around its proximity. These new borders and all possible risks emerging from unstable neighbours forced the EU to launch closer economic, political and cultural relations with those countries rather than creating new dividing lines.²³⁸ The potential spill-over effects of the ethnic conflicts in the EU's neighbours threaten the Union's inner stability and security as well. These conditions create 'fragile spots' which are ready to explode at any time.

“... the absence of mutually agreed settlements creates the potential for instability in and around the region... where conflicts are frozen, the absence of active violence creates the perception of stability. In turn, international attention turns to be weak and sporadic. Yet, frozen conflicts in terms of failed diplomatic peace efforts do not entail frozen dynamics on the ground. The inevitable evolution of the status quo through unilateral moves generates a latent potential for instability, ready to explore at any point in time.”²³⁹

Therefore, the EU needed a new strategy towards its neighbouring countries. All these developments motivated the EU to initiate a new policy framework in order to “avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union”.²⁴⁰ This would also enhance the EU's vision in order to gain more legitimacy as a powerful global actor in the international area.

In view of all the developments and changes, European Neighbourhood Policy- as a relatively new foreign policy area- can be seen as a reflection of the implementation of the EU's soft power in world politics. It was/is expected to provide the Union to become a more effective and legitimate actor in its near vicinity. Indeed the EU explicitly declared its aim as promoting its values such as spreading peace, stability, security and prosperity in its relations

²³⁷ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, “The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution”, *MIRICO Report: Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, pp.15-16

²³⁸ Elsa Tulmets, “Can the Discourse on ‘Soft Power’ Help the EU to Bridge its Capability-Expectation Gap?”, *European Political Economy Review* No.7, Summer 2007, p.196

²³⁹ Natalie Tocci, “Conflict Resolution in the European Neighbourhood: The Role of the EU as a Framework and as an Actor”, *EUI Working Papers*, RSCAS No.2004/29, European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Mediterranean Programme Series, 2004, p.1

²⁴⁰ Communication From the Commission to the Council and European Parliament, *Wider Europe- Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, Brussels, 2003, p.4

with the southern and eastern neighboring countries.²⁴¹ It also aims to strengthen its role as a global actor in solution of regional conflicts.²⁴² On the other hand, there was the risk that this relatively new foreign policy tool might become a disappointment for the EU's relations with the rest of the world; causing a loss of legitimacy and ineffectiveness.

I.III.II. EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY AS A CONFLICT PREVENTION TOOL

The European Neighbourhood Policy is one of the most important political tools of the EU's foreign policy. In this section, the ENP structure will be elaborated by questioning whether the development and implementation of the ENP can be regarded as an effective conflict resolution tool to strengthen the EU's regional and global role. The questions of "what were the motives for the EU to formulate this policy?", "what are the expectations from the implementation of this policy?" and "what are the main obstacles behind the ENP?" are evaluated in detail. The benefits and the deficiencies of this relatively new policy initiative are analysed in a detailed way in order to understand the EU's efforts and its basic capabilities.

I.III.II.I. THE ORIGINS OF THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

In 2002, at the sixth ECSA Conference, Romano Prodi offered some clues about a new policy structure that would help the EU to manage its relations with the neighbourhood countries. When the last round of enlargement changed the internal structure of the EU and brought the Union's borders closer to the potential areas of instability, the EU felt the necessity to find new ways to enhance its security and prosperity without directly affecting the EU's internal institutional structure. As Prodi emphasizes, the idea of "sharing everything but institutions"²⁴³ clearly reflects the EU's concern about the absorption capacity for the newcomers and seeks ways for an alternative policy that will enable the EU to spread its democratic values without offering a membership prospect.

²⁴¹ Natalie Tocci, "The EU in Conflict Resolution", Stefan Wolff and Christalla Yakinthou (eds.), *The EU in Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practice*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.5-6

²⁴² Ibid., pp.5-6

²⁴³ Prodi Romano, "A Wider Europe-A Proximity Policy as the Key to Stability", Sixth ECSA-World Conference, Brussel, 5-6 December 2002, p.5

Although the proximity policy does not promise an eventual membership, it is based on mutual benefits and obligations and aims to strengthen the relations between the EU and its near abroad. Even if this policy does not encompass the promise of membership, it does not also explicitly exclude an eventual membership. The policy intends “to offer more than a partnership and less than membership, without precluding the latter.”²⁴⁴

At the Copenhagen Council in 2002, this intention was confirmed and the EU’s determination to promote stability and security within and beyond its borders was emphasized.²⁴⁵ In 2003, the Commission released its Communication “Wider Europe” which included the countries bordering the new enlarged EU in the East and South.²⁴⁶ The aims of the proximity policy were formalized with the creation of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The main objective of the ENP is “to create an area of shared prosperity and values based on deeper economic integration intensified political relations, enhanced cross-border cooperation and shared responsibility for conflict prevention between the EU and its neighbours.”²⁴⁷

By using the ENP framework, the EU aims to develop deeper political relations and achieve economic integration with its neighbourhood. The ENP framework is based on a mutual commitment to the Union’s common values such as, democracy and human rights, the rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development.²⁴⁸ At the outset of the implementation of the policy, the Commission prepares individual “Country Strategy Reports”. These reports assess the current state of relations as well as the political, social and economic developments and identify a first set of issues that will have to be addressed. After the Country Reports are submitted to the Association Council, the Council decides whether to proceed to the next stage of relations with the concerned country. Subsequently, the ENP Action Plans (APs) are negotiated with each country based on the respective country’s needs and capabilities as well as the EU’s interests. The EU and the respective country jointly define an agenda of political and economic reforms by means of

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p.5

²⁴⁵ European Council, Copenhagen European Council 12-13 December 2002 Presidency Conclusions, Brussels, 29 January 2003

²⁴⁶ Communication From the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Wider Europe- Neighbourhood: A New Framework For Relations with Our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, Brussels, 11 March 2003

²⁴⁷ Rosa Rossi, “European Neighbourhood Policy: Political, Economic and Social Issues”, Fulvia Atina and Rosa Rossi(eds.), The Jean Monnet Centre Euro-Med Department of Political Studies, Catania, 2004, p.11

²⁴⁸ The Policy: What is the European Neighbourhood Policy?
http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm, accessed on 03.04.2012

ranging short and medium term (3-5 years) priorities which are regularly monitored through sub-committees with each country. Action Plans are comprehensive and also result driven documents which target the fundamental problematic issues defined in the priority area. Implementation of the reforms in APs is supported through various EC-funded financial and technical assistance programs.²⁴⁹

One of the important objectives of the ENP is to secure the Union's borders by projecting security in its neighbourhood countries. In this context, the ENP relies on policies and mechanisms that are explicitly based on the conditionality principle. The ENP is designed upon the existing legal and institutional arrangements and also creates additional instruments to implement and monitor the policy.²⁵⁰

I.III.II.II. THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY AS A SUBSTITUTE OF ENLARGEMENT POLICY

As indicated in the Wider Europe Document:

“Enlargement has unarguably been the Union's most successful foreign policy instrument... however, any decision on further EU expansion awaits a debate on the ultimate geographic limits of the Union. The European Neighbourhood Policy is therefore to provide for the development of a new relationship which would not, in the medium-term, include a perspective of membership or a role in the Union's institutions.”²⁵¹

Commissioner Chris Patten, Directorate General External Relations, similarly claimed:

“Over the past decade, the Union's most successful foreign policy instrument has undeniably been the promise of EU membership. This is not sustainable. For the coming decade, we need to find new ways to export the stability, security and

²⁴⁹ The Policy: How does the European Neighbourhood Policy Work?, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/howitworks_en.htm, accessed on 03.04.2012

²⁵⁰ Fraser Cameron, “The European Neighbourhood Policy as a Conflict Prevention Tool”, A European Policy Centre-Conflict Prevention Partnership Publication, 2006, p.16

²⁵¹ Communication From the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Wider Europe-Neighbourhood: A New Framework For Relations with Our Eastern and Southern Neighbours, Brussels, 11 March 2003, p.5

prosperity we have created within the enlarged EU. We should begin by agreeing on a clearer vision for relations with our neighbours”²⁵²

The end of the Cold War has not only brought new dimensions of security, but also opened debates on defining Europe’s borders, particularly, where Europe ends. The EU’s internal security has also been affected by external security concerns. An unstable environment can threaten the Union’s security. Therefore, in order to control these kinds of threats, the EU has decided to enhance its role in the international area. In the post-Cold War period, the EU has aimed to stabilize the potential security vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe with an extensive enlargement policy.

Although the Union’s membership prospect seems to be an effective tool for securing Europe, enlargement has a limited capacity in the long run. Enlargement as a foreign policy tool cannot be used endlessly. For example, in 1993 Copenhagen Council, the highly contested “absorption capacity” concept created divisions among the members about the future of enlargement.²⁵³ Hence, rather than dealing with the limitations of the EU membership discussions, the ENP has been assumed as an alternative tool for spreading stability and order beyond the Union’s borders.²⁵⁴ From that aspect, the ENP is mostly interpreted as an alternative way to replace the EU’s enlargement strategy and enhance the Union’s role in its neighbourhood.

Since the 1993 Copenhagen European Council emphasized “the Union’s capacity to absorb new members”, the debate over the EU’s absorption capacity became a pre-dominant issue among the Member States.²⁵⁵ The older members have more concerns about the absorption capacity of the EU. They believe that the rapid expansion of the EU can have negative consequences over the EU’s institutions, budget and common policies, and therefore, they hesitate to make any further commitments.²⁵⁶ On the other hand, the new Member States which have more ambitious policies, especially toward the post-Soviet countries since they share geographically and historically closer ties with these countries, adopt a more sensitive

²⁵² Commissioner Chris Patten, Directorate General External Relations, 11 March 2003, cited in Rosa Rossi, “European Neighbourhood Policy: Political, Economic and Social Issues”, Fulvia Atina and Rosa Rossi (eds.), *The Jean Monnet Centre Euro-Med Department of Political Studies*, Catania, 2004, p.8

²⁵³ Sandra Lavenex and Frank Schimmelfenning, “Relations with Wider Europe”, in Ulrich Sedelmeider and Alasdair R. Young (eds.), *JCMS 2007 Volume 45 Annual Review*, p.144-145

²⁵⁴ Carmen Stoian, “The Benefits and Limitations of European Union Membership as a Security Mechanism”, *European Integration* Vol.29, No.2, May 2007, pp.189-190

²⁵⁵ Sandra Lavenex and Frank Schimmelfenning, “Relations with Wider Europe”, in Ulrich Sedelmeider and Alasdair R. Young (eds.), *JCMS 2007 Volume 45 Annual Review*, p.145

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.144-146

approach to the issue.²⁵⁷ Whilst old members refrain from making further commitments, the new members are in favor of taking a more decisive approach towards the neighbourhood countries, such as Poland's active support for "the promotion of an interpretation of the ENP is a kind of pre-accession agreement".²⁵⁸

Indeed, the ENP is officially adopted to enhance cooperation and promote stability and prosperity in the EU's neighbourhood countries with the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours.²⁵⁹ Therefore, this new foreign policy mechanism helps the EU to regulate its relations with its neighbourhood countries in a platform where vague promises are made. The ENP does not offer an ultimate membership prospect. Instead, the ENP offers the neighbouring countries some other benefits such as enhanced political cooperation, provision of additional financial assistance through new mechanisms.

Although the lack of membership prospect can be considered as the most important aspect of the ENP, the EU does not explicitly reject the idea of becoming a Union member for the ENP countries by claiming that "the policy would not start with the promise of membership, (but) would not exclude eventual membership".²⁶⁰ In this sense, the ENP has been founded upon the creation of "close partnership with the EU's neighbouring states, bringing them as close to the EU as possible, without being a member."²⁶¹

On the other hand, the enlargement the policy inspires the ideas and instruments that are used in the ENP. Within this respect, the ENP can be considered as an alternative way that the EU is using in order to overcome, or at least to organize its internal debates about further enlargement for the stability and prosperity of the Union. The ENP countries are promised to

²⁵⁷ Gabriella Meloni, "Is the Same Toolkit Used During the Enlargement Still Applicable to the Countries of the New Neighbourhood: A Problem of Mismatching Between Objective and Instruments", in Marise Cremona and Gabriella Meloni (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy: a Framework for Modernisation*, European University Institute Department of Law EUI Working Papers LAW 2007/21, pp.97-99

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p.98

²⁵⁹ The policy: What is the European Neighbourhood Policy?

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm, accessed on 03.04.2012

The European Neighbourhood Policy applies to the EU's immediate neighbours by land or sea – Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. Although Russia is also a neighbour of the EU, our relations are instead developed through a Strategic Partnership covering four "common spaces"

²⁶⁰ Prodi Romano, "A Wider Europe-A Proximity Policy as the Key to Stability", Sixth ECSA-World Conference, Brussel, 5-6 December 2002, p.5

²⁶¹ Sven Biscop, *The European Security Strategy A Global Agenda for Positive Power*, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005, p.39

enjoy, as in Prodi's words "sharing everything with the Union, but the institutions".²⁶² The neighbouring countries have to respect to the shared values such as respect for human rights, minority rights, the rule of law, good governance, which can be considered as relatively similar to the accession criteria.²⁶³

The experience of enlargement sets the ground for the creation of a soft method of coordination in the EU's external relations by strengthening its bilateral relations on a negotiation base and relies on the political engagement of third states to make internal reforms following the EU model.²⁶⁴ In this sense, the EU has regulated its tools and formed a new policy in order to conduct its relations with its neighbourhood. Although the ENP borrows some elements from the enlargement policy such as the promotion of democratic values, prevailing peace and cooperation, this new policy is based on a differentiated foreign policy platform, without the promise of membership.

I.III.II.III. THE SECURITY DIMENSION OF THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

During the development of the ENP, the EU became aware of the fact that through enhancing democratic values and prosperity, this policy might potentially contribute to conflict resolution processes by reinforcing the capabilities of the partner states. Although not designed as a conflict resolution tool, the ENP has been considered and used as a tool for dealing with conflict and offers participating countries an additional foreign policy orientation.²⁶⁵

As indicated both in the Wider Europe Document and European Security Strategy, the main focus of the EU's neighbourhood policy is the promotion of internal stability in the countries on the European border which has a direct reflection on European security. The APs encourage a wide range of initiatives in cross-border cooperation and in regional cooperation.

²⁶² Prodi Romano, "A Wider Europe-A Proximity Policy as the Key to Stability", Sixth ECSA-World Conference, Brussel, 5-6 December 2002, p.5

²⁶³ Elsa Tulmets, "Is a Soft Method of Coordination Best Adapted to the Context of the EU's Neighbourhood?" in Marise Cremona and Gabriella Meloni (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy: a Framework for Modernisation*, European University Institute Department of Law EUI Working Papers LAW 2007/21, pp.113-117

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.113

²⁶⁵ Stefan Ganzle, "The European Neighbourhood Policy: A Strategy for Security in Europe?", in Stephan Ganzle and Allen G. Sens (ed.), *The Changing Politics of European Security*, New York: Palgrave, 2007, p.123

The EU attempts to foster confidence-building measures between the EU and the ENP countries as well as among the ENP countries themselves.²⁶⁶

The ENP's possible impact in terms of conflict resolution is also mentioned in several EU official documents. The European Commission's European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper adopted in May 2004 is important in this regard. According to the Strategy Paper²⁶⁷:

“The privileged relationship with neighbours will build on mutual commitment to common values principally within the fields of the rule of law, good governance, the respect for human rights, including minority rights, the promotion of good neighbourly relations, and the principles of market economy and sustainable development. Commitments will also be sought to certain essential aspects of the EU's external action, including, in particular, the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as abidance by international law and efforts to achieve *conflict resolution*.”²⁶⁸

In June 2004, when the Council of the EU decided to include the three Caucasian states which suffered from frozen conflicts, into the ENP framework, it became a necessity to prioritize the conflict resolution as a top issue to be dealt with. Although conflict resolution played a significant role in the politics of the EU's Eastern enlargement, it was not explicitly prioritized at the launch of the ENP. Since conflict prevention and crisis management strategies are held under the Council competence and the ENP is a Commission driven policy, the Commission is reluctant to directly engage in conflict resolution.²⁶⁹ Moreover, the ENP Action Plans make very little direct mention on conflict prevention; instead, they prefer to promote political and economic reforms through various mechanisms. Nevertheless, the EU prefers to support existing conflict resolution mechanisms instead of actively involving in the conflict issues.²⁷⁰ The ENP, in that regard, is an important tool to be employed, especially in terms of creating an indirect impact.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p.124

²⁶⁷The European Commission, Communication from the Commission: European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper, Brussels, 12.5.2004

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p.3 (emphasis added)

²⁶⁹Stefan Ganzle, “The European Neighbourhood Policy: A Strategy for Security in Europe?”, in Stephan Ganzle and Allen G. Sens (ed.), *The Changing Politics of European Security*, New York: Palgrave, 2007, p.125

²⁷⁰ Fraser Cameron, “The European Neighbourhood Policy as a Conflict Prevention Tool”, A European Policy Centre-Conflict Prevention Partnership Publication, 2006, p.17

Using the ENP as a conflict resolution tool is interrelated with the policy-makers' perceptions and expectations from the ENP since the ENP is a highly demand-driven policy.²⁷¹ The ENP Country Papers call for a "shared responsibility for conflict prevention and resolution".²⁷² Some partner countries also view the EU as an actor to engage in conflict resolution. Both Georgia and Moldova have expressed their hopes that the EU would play a pivotal role in resolving conflicts in their territories. On the other hand, as one EU official explained: "[...] unlike Georgia or Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan did not force the issue on the agenda".²⁷³ As Ganzle clarifies "any EU's effort needs to be matched by the ENP countries and their readiness to accept the EU as an actor in conflict prevention and resolution".²⁷⁴ The failure or the success of the EU's efforts is also closely linked to both sides' political will and readiness.

The 2003 European Security Strategy points out the importance of having secure neighbours as one of the EU's strategic priorities.²⁷⁵ In this context, the ENP realizes this objective and the EU forms a new policy framework to promote security and stability by creating channels for interaction, learning, monitoring and targeting of aid.²⁷⁶ While an overarching concern for stability is emphasized in the ENP's policy design, the issue of conflict prevention and management strategies has gradually gained prominent importance in the ENP framework. The Action Plans do not explicitly mention the conflict resolution as the primary focal point of the ENP. Indeed, there are analysts who claim that the ENP is "politically, institutionally and financially under-equipped" to resolve the problems and has obvious external constraints, such as Russian role in the region.²⁷⁷ Therefore, it can be said that the EU prefers to see the ENP as a tool for enhanced political dialogue and cooperation between the EU and the neighbour countries. Furthermore, the EU intends to contribute to the security and stability of its neighbourhood through further integration. Nevertheless, indirectly, the EU's efforts create an impact for conflict resolution because promotion of

²⁷¹ Stefan Ganzle, "The European Neighbourhood Policy: A Strategy for Security in Europe?", in Stephan Ganzle and Allen G. Sens (ed.), *The Changing Politics of European Security*, New York: Palgrave, 2007, p.125

²⁷² Ibid., p.125

²⁷³ Interview with an EU Member State diplomat, Baku, 3 April 2008, cited in Nicu Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International, 2009, p.472

²⁷⁴ Stefan Ganzle, "The European Neighbourhood Policy: A Strategy for Security in Europe?", in Stephan Ganzle and Allen G. Sens (eds.), *The Changing Politics of European Security*, New York: Palgrave, 2007, p.128

²⁷⁵ Council of the European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003

²⁷⁶ Gwendolyn Sasse, "The European Neighbourhood Policy and Conflict Management: A Comparison of Moldova and the Caucasus", *Ethnopolitics* Vol.8 No.3, 2009, pp.369-370

²⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.369-370

democracy, human rights and the rule of law are the major ingredients of conflict resolution as well.

I.III.II.IV. THE CHALLENGES FOR THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

The ENP can be considered as an ambiguous and considerably new policy instrument of the EU's foreign policy. After the final wave of enlargement, the EU has faced a politically unstable environment around its new borders. The EU has had to respond to these possible threats and to protect its internal structure and its global prestige. As a result of the Union's inadequate response to the Yugoslavian crises, the EU has decided to improve its capabilities against the potential threats that may come from outside its borders.

As indicated in the 2008 Report on the Implementation of European Security Strategy, the EU aims to play a more effective and capable role in countering violent conflicts in its eastern and southern neighbours for its own security, as well as the neighbouring countries' security and stability.²⁷⁸ The EU admits that its capacity to address the challenges should be strengthened through better coordination, and believes that in order to respond to the changing security environment it has to take strategic decisions and play more active role in its neighborhood.²⁷⁹ Although the EU has increased its engagement in the neighbouring countries' internal problems through the ENP basis, this initiative has some shortcomings that can be listed as follows.

The ENP has several core features that are distinct to its own political nature such as being a tailor-made approach, having a strong conditionality on the ENP partner countries and the absence of EU membership objective.²⁸⁰ The first and the most important controversial aspects of the ENP is the "lack of membership" prospect. As required in the enlargement process, the ENP countries are expected to follow political conditionality on implementation of common values of the Union, however, they are not offered the biggest "carrot" of

²⁷⁸ European Council, Report on the Implementation of European Security Strategy-Providing Security in a Changing World, Brussels, 11 December 2008

²⁷⁹ Ibid., pp.6-10

²⁸⁰ Roman Petrov, "Legal and Political Expectations of Neighbouring Countries from the European Neighbourhood Policy", in Marise Cremona and Gabriella Meloni (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy: a Framework for Modernisation*, European University Institute Department of Law EUI Working Papers LAW 2007/21, pp.12-13

becoming a member in the end. There is not even a clear assessment about what would be the next basis when/if the reforms in the APs are met. The EU does not have adequate means to promote its norms in the neighbourhood countries since there is not a clearly defined outcome at the end of the process, such as a membership perspective. The ambiguity about the ultimate goal may also cause different expectations in the recipient countries.²⁸¹ The unfulfillment of the membership expectation might create problems and undermine the effectiveness of the ENP in the eyes of the partner countries. Therefore, the EU can only partially use its power of attraction and persuasion to deal with common concerns.²⁸²

The vague wording on the membership prospect may cause different expectations from this policy and may cause to question the EU's credibility in the neighbourhood countries. Indeed, the EU aims to overcome this ambiguity problem in the ENP. The EU claims that providing security is not synonymous with enlargement and, consequently, the ENP does not necessarily lead to a Union membership.²⁸³ However, the ambiguous wording on the prospect of membership status leads more confusion in the neighbourhood countries' assessments over the ENP. Different expectations from the ENP might create some disappointments in the implementation process. Although the tailor-made Action Plans clarify detailed assessments and prospects for both sides, neighbourhood countries' expectations from the EU's involvement and the vague prospect of membership might create inconsistency between the EU and the ENP partner countries. The lack of credibility of the EU's capabilities has also limited the ENP's success in terms of prevention of conflicts.²⁸⁴

The vague provisions and the unbalanced commitments of the EU towards the partner countries can be considered as another weakness that the ENP has been criticized of.²⁸⁵ For example, the EU offers a stake in the internal market to those partners which achieve to meet the benchmarks and objectives in their APs. Nevertheless, these stakes are not clearly listed in any document and left to the EU's interpretation and decision. This refers to the other shortcoming about the ENP. The AP's are also criticized for having asymmetrical components

²⁸¹ Ibid., pp.12-13

²⁸² Elsa Tulmets, "Can the Discourse on 'Soft Power' Help the EU to Bridge its Capability-Expectation Gap?", *European Political Economy Review* No.7, Summer 2007, p.202

²⁸³ Gianni Bonvicini, "The European Neighbourhood Policy and Its Linkage With European Security", Danish Institute For International Studies, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2006, p.25

²⁸⁴ Elsa Tulmets, "Is a Soft Method of Coordination Best Adapted to the Context of the EU's Neighbourhood? in Marise Cremona and Gabriella Meloni (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy: a Framework for Modernisation*, European University Institute Department of Law EU Working Papers LAW 2007/21, p.124

²⁸⁵ Irina Pop, "The Assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the South Caucasus: What the European Union Can Do?", *Eurotimes* Vol.7, 2009, p.23

and for favoring mostly the EU's interests.²⁸⁶ Although initially the EU declared that the APs would be designed in such a way to enhance joint ownership by the Union and the partner country, the practice (that the EU uses in its conditionality) has not changed. It is the EU which sets the rules and the partner countries has to obey those rules.

As mentioned above, the tailor-made approach also raises questions on the implementation and the consistency of the ENP. The EU applies this tailor-made approach under the ENP framework according to each country's needs and capacities, as well as its own interests. Since each country is different, flexible and tailor-made arrangements can be more beneficial for both sides. However, the ENP covers heterogeneous regions; therefore, this tailor-made approach may lead to different interpretations and create inconsistency between the ENP partner countries and the EU.²⁸⁷ As Delcour states:

“... the EU's influence over conflict settlement and its credibility vis-a-vis the neighbouring countries concerned are also undermined by its lack of discursive coherence in the ENP policy documents: whereas the Action Plan concluded with Azerbaijan mentions territorial integrity, the ENP AP negotiated with Armenia refers to the principle of self-determination.”²⁸⁸

The conflicts and cooperation among the regional actors are another important determinant of the effectiveness of the ENP. The bilateral relations cannot disregard the effect of these complex relations at the sub-regional level. The long-lasting conflicts among neighbours, and/or within the neighbouring countries' borders, and the dominant effect of the Russian influence, i.e in the South Caucasus, present the main challenges for the EU in the post-Soviet countries. The EU should assign more concrete policies and designate a strategic approach in its relations, especially with the post-Soviet neighbouring countries. For instance, any further involvement in the Southern Caucasus that will threaten the Russian interests in the region can create another challenge for the EU's soft-power discourses under the ENP framework.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Elsa Tulmets, “Is a Soft Method of Coordination Best Adapted to the Context of the EU's Neighbourhood? in Marise Cremona and Gabriella Meloni (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy: a Framework for Modernisation*, European University Institute Department of Law EUI Working Papers LAW 2007/21, p.124

²⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.124-125

²⁸⁸ Laure Delcour, “The European Union, a Security Provider in the Eastern Neighbourhood?”, *European Security* Vol.19, No.4, December 2010, p.539

²⁸⁹ Gabriella Meloni, “Is the Same Toolkit Used During the Enlargement Still Applicable to the Countries of the New Neighbourhood: A Problem of Mismatching Between Objective and Instruments”, in Marise Cremona and

In sum, the ENP represents not only an alternative policy for enlargement to sustain stability and security in Europe, but also an important instrument for the European foreign policy structure which contains an economic scope as well as a certain security aspect.²⁹⁰ The ENP can reinforce stability and security, and contribute to conflict resolution efforts through fostering communication and political dialogue, spreading common values and creating shared obligations. In this respect, conflict resolution can be seen as an outcome rather than an explicit object.

Some analysts see the ENP as a concrete alternative for enlargement and “the ENP, as the EU’s newest foreign policy instrument, represents a way for the EU to test its capacity to become a consistent and coherent international actor, at least in its own neighbourhood”.²⁹¹ However, the EU’s own weaknesses and the political-social deficits in the partner countries can raise some questions about the success of this policy.

In order to increase the recognition of the EU in the international arena, the EU should enhance its consistency to gain internal as well as external legitimacy. It should also enhance its dialogue with its neighbourhood countries. The EU has to find the right balance between promises and expectations in order to avoid the criticisms about the effectiveness of the ENP.²⁹² The EU is trying to improve the ENP by making some improvements. Achieving institutional coordination and consistency is an important part of these improvements. Especially after the Lisbon treaty, the EU aims to address the weaknesses and deficiencies in the ENP. Therefore, the Commission and the European External Action Service are working together to conduct a comprehensive review of the ENP in order to strengthen the EU’s role in its neighbourhood.²⁹³ These efforts would certainly help to improve its capabilities in conflict resolution in its neighbourhood area.

Gabriella Meloni (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy: a Framework for Modernisation*, European University Institute Department of Law EUI Working Papers LAW 2007/21, p.98

²⁹⁰ Gianni Bonvicini, “The European Neighbourhood Policy and Its Linkage With European Security”, Danish Institute For International Studies, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2006, p.27

²⁹¹ Elsa Tulmets, “Can the Discourse on ‘Soft Power’ Help the EU to Bridge its Capability-Expectation Gap?”, *European Political Economy Review* No.7, Summer 2007, p.216

²⁹² *Ibid.*, pp.214-216

²⁹³ Sabine Fischer, “The EU’s Non-Recognition and Engagement Policy Towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *European Union Institute for Security Studies Seminar Report*, Brussels, 1-2 December 2010
http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/NREP_report.pdf, accessed on 01.11.2012

Concluding Remarks

The EU has improved its international role by enhancing its internal capabilities and by initiating new policies in order to promote peace and security beyond its borders. The changes in the international system after the Cold War has forced the EU to become more involved in world politics for its own security.

In this respect, the EU's involvement in the conflicts in its vicinity is crucial in terms of strengthening the EU's international role as a credible and capable actor. Moreover, the spill-over effects of violent conflicts in its neighbourhood might have direct consequences for the EU's own security. Therefore, the EU has gradually increased its engagement in the neighbouring countries' conflicts through establishing various policy frameworks. In this respect, the European Neighbourhood Policy presents a crucial initiative that provides the EU an important leverage and knowledge about its neighbourhood countries and their conflicts. Although this policy has some deficiencies in its implementation, it still has constructive contributions in terms of the EU's involvement in the partner countries' problems. Surely, it is not the only tool through which the EU engages in the South Caucasus. A detailed analysis of the tools employed by the EU in its policy on the South Caucasus is provided in the last chapter. Before examining the EU's involvement in the South Caucasian conflicts, the social dynamics and the evolution of these three intractable conflicts is scrutinized in order to assess the EU's efforts in the conflict resolution process.

CHAPTER II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS FOR THE EU

In the 1990's, the EU's policy towards eastern countries was not a priority on the Union's agenda and was mainly based on the existing framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which formed a relatively coherent group of post-Soviet states.²⁹⁴ The EU, without offering a membership prospect to these countries, intended to widen its relations with these post-Soviet countries in the framework of the CIS and supported their close economic links with Russia.²⁹⁵

CIS does not have supranational features and serves to develop and strengthen the friendship, inter ethnic accord, mutual understanding and trust among its members and enhance their economic cooperation.²⁹⁶ In 1993, the Heads of the CIS states signed an agreement on the creation of Economic Union to form common economic space grounded on free movement of goods, services, labour force to elaborate coordinated external economic policy and methods of regulating economic activity.²⁹⁷ However, due to some inadequacy and disputes among its members, the CIS failed to become a coherent and viable framework.²⁹⁸ The deficiencies and disunity in the CIS framework paved way for the development of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) between the EU and the post-Soviet countries in order to avoid the complexity. The PCAs, which determine the framework of the relationship between the EU and this group of countries, reflect the general linkage between democratization, cooperation and technical assistance. However in some aspect, they fail to offer enough incentives to initiate necessitated reforms in these countries.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ Georgi Kamov, "EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas", Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, pp.49-50
CIS unites Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine; Georgia left after the 2008 Georgia-Russia war.

For further information see; Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States
http://www.cisstat.com/eng/frame_about.htm, accessed on 17.04.2012.

²⁹⁵ Ibid. pp.49-50

²⁹⁶ Inventory of International Nonproliferation Organizations and Regimes, Centre for Nonproliferation Studies, updated 2007.

<http://cns.miis.edu/inventory/pdfs/cis.pdf>, accessed on 16.04.2012.

²⁹⁷ Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States
http://www.cisstat.com/eng/frame_about.htm, accessed on 17.04.2012.

²⁹⁸ Georgi Kamov, "EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas", Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, p.50

²⁹⁹ Ibid. p.50

When the Cold War ended, European states and the EU did not give much attention to the conflicts in the Caucasus. The EU was reluctant to get involved in this area. Especially in the North Caucasus, European involvement was severely limited by the concerns of Russia since the Russian government had been constantly trying to prevent any external involvement in the region.³⁰⁰ Apart from the Russian pressure, at that time, the EU was dealing to cope with the Balkan crisis and was being highly criticized for the absence of a Common Foreign and Security Policy.³⁰¹ The security issues in the Balkans in 1990's were a priority for the EU policy preferences and the Caucasian countries were too far away from the Union's borders. Although individual European states gradually became an important donor to the South Caucasus states in terms of development -by assisting other international organizations' projects or corporate interests of the energy sector-, the EU's approach had been far away from being coherent and effective with a common stance.³⁰² It could rather be labeled as "cautious and tentative".³⁰³

However, the 2004 and 2007 enlargement process brought the South Caucasus countries closer to the EU's borders along with the security issues of these countries into the EU's agenda. Eventually, the EU's reconsidered its policy towards the concerning region. As the ESS explicitly underlines the importance of securing neighbourhood states, which might pose challenges to the stability and prosperity of Europe, the EU has also emphasized the necessity of taking more active and stronger actions against the Southern Caucasus region's problems, which will also be a neighbouring region.³⁰⁴

"It is not our interest that enlargement should create new dividing lines in Europe. We need to extend the benefits of economic and political cooperation to our neighbours in the East while tackling political problems there. We should now take a stronger and more active interest in the problem of the South Caucasus, which will in due course also be a neighbouring region".³⁰⁵

³⁰⁰ Svante E. Cornell and Frederick S. Starr, "The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe", *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Paper*, June 2006, p. 11

³⁰¹ Ibid. p. 11

³⁰² Ibid. p. 11

³⁰³ Ibid. p. 11

³⁰⁴ Council of European Union, A Secure Europe in a Better World European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

The enlarged EU felt the necessity of increasing its presence in its eastern neighbours to build more comprehensive and cooperative multilateral relations in order to provide security and prosperity both for the Union and for its neighbouring countries. This task would also enhance the EU's global role by increasing its visibility and perception of being an effective international security actor in the international arena. Consequently, the South Caucasus region, with its complex security problems as well as economic and alternative transportation benefits, has gained more importance in the EU's foreign policy. With the increased attention to the region, three South Caucasus countries, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, were included into the ENP framework. Therefore, the vague relations between South Caucasian states and the EU have changed into a clearer direction and the EU has gained more leverage in the region.

The EU's capacity to be an influential actor in the region and its conflicts, however, does not only depend on the EU itself. The other regional and international actors' policies over the region's politics sometimes pose serious obstacles to the EU's actions in the region. Particularly, the Russian presence in the South Caucasian conflicts has a crucial role in this regard. In addition to Balkan's urgency, the Russian factor in the Caucasus was, and still is, an additional constraint for the EU's further involvement in the region's problems apart from its financial aid.³⁰⁶

This chapter elaborates the importance of the South Caucasus region for the economic and security interests of the Union. It specifies the major challenges and opportunities that the EU has faced upon its further involvement in the region's political and economic developments. A brief historical overview of the region's three most intractable conflict, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, is addressed in this chapter in order to comprehend the whole security problematique in the region along with the obstacles, dynamics and the efforts which have been made to find a peaceful solution to the region's problem, and to evaluate the EU's stance in the next chapter accordingly. The political developments in the Southern Caucasian states and their policy orientations after acquiring their independence and the effects of these changes over the region's long-standing conflicts are also tackled in this chapter in order to draw a general picture to understand the current situation in the conflict zones. Russian dominance in the region along with its relations with the three South Caucasus states are evaluated in the final part of this chapter. The Russian

³⁰⁶ Georgi Kamov, "EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas", Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, pp.49-50

effect on the region countries and dominantly on the progress of conflicts is also evaluated by giving specific attention to the Russian interests in the region.

II.I. THE EU'S POSITION AND INTERESTS IN THE REGION

The South Caucasus region has gradually gained importance in the Union's foreign policy due to its strategic importance for both security and economic reasons. Few Member States have historical bilateral relations with the three South Caucasian countries; and the EU has gradually begun to develop region-specific policies and instruments.³⁰⁷ However, there are many other motives for the EU to follow a more pro-active role in this region. The growing importance of the region in the foreign policy preferences of the international actors makes the resolution of intractable conflicts a priority issue for the EU.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the EU's involvement in the South Caucasus region at the institutional level was delayed as compared to other international organizations or individual states.³⁰⁸ Some general reasons why the region did not get much attention from the EU after the Cold War can be listed as:

- 1- The EU had other priorities in other areas, as in the CEECs. Member States were focusing on their immediate neighbours to deal with the Central and Eastern European countries' democratic transition and the violent breakup of former Yugoslavia. Therefore, due to distance of the South Caucasus from the EU at that time and the Soviet legacy which prevailed in the region, the EU did not, or could not, give a higher priority to the region in its foreign policy implementations.³⁰⁹
- 2- There was a lack of knowledge about the region³¹⁰
- 3- There was many frozen and potential conflict areas and tensions prevailing in the whole region, so the region was unstable and full of potential security threats.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, p.1

³⁰⁸ Leila Alieva, "EU and the South Caucasus", *Center for Applied Policy Research (C.A.P) Discussion Paper*, 2006, p. 2 and Irina Pop, "The Assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the South Caucasus: What the European Union Can Do?", *EuroTimes* Vol.7, 2009, p.24

³⁰⁹ Emma J.Stewart, "EU Conflict Management in the South Caucasus: A Preliminary Analysis", The National Academy for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, Specialist Group Ethnopolitics, University of Nottingham, England, 22-23 November 2007, p. 6

³¹⁰ Leila Alieva, "EU and the South Caucasus", *Center for Applied Policy Research (C.A.P) Discussion Paper*, 2006, p. 1

4- South Caucasian states have common borders with influential and powerful regional powers, such as Russia and Iran, therefore, this proximity to very fragile neighbors force the EU to act more careful about being closely engaged in the region.³¹²

On the other hand, the region's importance was also increased for the EU both in economic and security terms. Therefore, the reasons listed above could no longer be used as an excuse for the EU's limited ties with the region.³¹³ Furthermore, the EU could no longer "avoid the geopolitical implications of enlargement" and the effects of global challenges as well.³¹⁴ Although the South Caucasus has seemed to be in the Russian sphere of influence, the interlinked security problems have inevitably affected Europe's future security and stability. Additionally, the changes in the Union itself, as the inclusion of new Member States and its political agenda setting preferences, and the changes in the international arena, especially with the globalization effect on both economic and political affairs, forced the EU to act more eager to become a coherent and more active actor in the international area.

II.I.I. THE IMPACT OF ENLARGEMENT IN THE EU'S PERCEPTION OF SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

The EU's policy towards the South Caucasus has usually been reactive towards the developments in the region rather than reflecting a calculated political strategy and decisions taken as a part of policy-making processes.³¹⁵ The waves of EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007 brought the EU closer to the South Caucasus region and pushed the borders of the organization eastwards to the Black Sea. Therefore, the EU's engagement in the region became inevitable for providing security and stability of the Union.

³¹¹ S. Neil MacFarlane and Claude Zullo, "Petroleum and Politics in the Caucasus: New Wine in Old Bottles?" Friedemann Müller and Claude Zullo (ed.) *The European Union and The Caucasus Region: Oil, Interests and Influence*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, December 1998, pp.25-39

³¹² Leila Alieva, "EU and the South Caucasus", *Center for Applied Policy Research (C.A.P) Discussion Paper*, 2006, p. 1

³¹³ Irina Pop, "The Assesment of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the South Caucasus: What the European Union Can Do?", *EuroTimes* Vol.7, 2009, p.24

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.24

³¹⁵ Dov Lynch, "The EU: Towards a Strategy", in Dov Lynch (ed.), *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU_ Chaillot Papers* No.65, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2003, p.173

New borders bring also new concerns for the EU about the states on its new periphery and the potential threats which the EU might face around its new borders.³¹⁶ Therefore, the Union set a new initiative to create a “ring of friendship” that promotes peace and security without creating new dividing lines.³¹⁷ Consequently, the final enlargement, which brought the Union’s border close to this politically fragile and unstable region, obliged the EU to re-identify its interests in the region and to develop its strategy according to regional dynamics and realities.³¹⁸

The policy preferences of the new Member States affect the Union’s internal dynamics in policy orientations and lead to a reconsideration of the Union’s interests and needs. Consequently, this internal change also affects the Union’s external policy preferences and agenda settings.³¹⁹ As Lynch points out, new Member States can have different priorities from the old members and this might redirect the Union’s policy preferences, such as Poland’s insistence on pushing the EU for a greater involvement in Moldova and Ukraine, or as Lithuania and Latvia willingness to have an active role in developing military ties with the three South Caucasus states.³²⁰

Even their attempts would not have satisfactory results and they might not precisely upload their preferences, the issues which had been attached little attention before, now would be considered at the EU level.³²¹ The foreign policies of the new members require the EU to give attention to the problems that has only been superficially watched by the EU.³²² Therefore, this would provide a substantial base for the EU to become more aware of its potential gains from the South Caucasus region and to concentrate on the region’s potential benefits. Moreover, some Member States used their presidencies, as in the Finnish presidency in 1999 and the Swedish presidency in 2001, for getting EU’s attention towards the regional dynamics³²³. These have also paved the way for greater involvement of the EU in the region’s politics on economic basis as well as in security providing activities. The activities and

³¹⁶ Ibid. pp.173-174

³¹⁷ Council of European Union, A Secure Europe in a Better World European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003

³¹⁸ Svante E. Cornell and Frederick S. Starr, “The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Paper*, June 2006, p. 7

³¹⁹ Dov Lynch, “The EU: Towards a Strategy”, in Dov Lynch (ed.), *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU_ Chaillot Papers* No.65, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2003, p.173

³²⁰ Ibid., p.173

³²¹ Ibid., p.173

³²² Ibid., p.173

³²³ Ibid., p.179

requests of these more “friendly” Member States provide the fertile ground to discuss and reconsider the level and scope of the EU’s relations with the region’s countries.

The policies of the ex-Soviet Member States, especially Baltic states, towards the South Caucasian countries have been more prone to develop tighter relations especially against the dominant Russian policies towards the concerning region. The recent developments prove the validation of this perception. Shortly after the Russian army’s entrance into the Georgian soils, Poland made a call for an emergent EU summit to gather the EU foreign ministers and cease the violence in the region.³²⁴ The Finnish foreign minister, Alexander Stubb, presented the three-point French peace plan that was based on immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of both armies with respect to Georgian territorial integrity and sovereignty.³²⁵ Subsequently, the ex-Soviet countries’ presidents, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, made also a joint statement declaring that “the EU and NATO must take the initiative and stand up against the spread of imperial and revisionist policy in the east of Europe.”³²⁶ All these ex-Soviet Member States’ efforts raised the EU’s attention towards the region’s problems more than ever before.

II.I.II. THE EU’S CONCERNS REGARDING SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE REGION

The South Caucasus is a complicated region, which composes of divergent ethnic groups which have challenging interests. Its strategic importance as an energy producing and transit region; its geopolitical position of being the route of international crime and trafficking activities make the region as a priority area for the EU’s own security and stability.³²⁷ On the other hand, an increased EU involvement in the region presents a challenging task for the EU since the multitude of the region’s ethnic group conflicts and the existence of a significant international presence in the region ranging from the UN and the OSCE to other regional actors, who have different interests over the region’s politics such as Russia, Turkey and

³²⁴ Philippa Runner, “EU Preparing Snap Summit on Russian-Georgian War”, EU Observer, 10.08.2008

<http://euobserver.com/foreign/26596>, accessed on 05.12.2012

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Georgi Kamov, “EU’s Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas”, Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, pp.56-57

Iran.³²⁸ All these factors have some crucial impacts to impede the level and scope of the EU's involvement in the region's conflicts.

Instability in the South Caucasus might not seem to be a direct threat to European security. However, any possible challenges to international crime and trafficking as well as economic fluctuations in the region on energy resources and pipeline safety might have crucial impacts on the EU's internal security due to its geographic proximity.³²⁹ The region's unresolved conflicts pose a major challenge in the region, both for the newly independent states to fulfill their potential and for the international security as leaving unrecognized governments isolated, radicalized by turning them into harsh, militarized societies that are open to crime.³³⁰

Although conflict resolution is not directly mentioned as a priority on the EU's agenda concerning its relation with the South Caucasus countries, the incremental rise in the EU's foreign policy discourses referring to the importance of the South Caucasus region for the Union has shown that the EU has recognized its interests in the region. These conflicts can be considered as the major obstacles for the regional and international security. As Irina Pop clearly categorizes the main influences of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on regional politics:

“First, conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is the major conflict which divides the region on two blocks and prevents Caucasus states from the trilateral security cooperation, in which EU shows significant interest. Secondly, it prevents the realization of the European vision of the regional and trans-regional economic cooperation and transportation routes. Thirdly, it blocks democratization and reform process and thus European integration process. Fourthly, leaves the gray zones where the control over the illegal trade and activities is complicated.”³³¹

This outline is also valid for the South Ossetia and Abkhazia conflicts which have also divided the region and prevent the Southern Caucasus countries to cooperate on security matters on a broader scale. Therefore, the EU should have a more serious and concrete action to facilitate the resolution of these three frozen conflicts, which make the region more fragile and vulnerable with the existence of unrecognized and militarized societies.

³²⁸ Ibid., pp.56-57

³²⁹ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, p.i

³³⁰ The Hazards of a Long, Hard Freeze, The Economist, August 19, 2004

http://www.economist.com/node/3110979?story_id=3110979, accessed on 24.04.2012

³³¹ Irina Pop, “The Assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the South Caucasus: What the European Union Can Do?”, *Eurotimes* Vol.7, 2009, pp.23-24

“... the region’s unresolved wars in Transdnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh-are a big reason why the newly independent states of the former Soviet south have failed miserably to fulfill their potential. Instead of enjoying their freedom, they have emerged into the world as stunted, embittered and ill-governed creatures.”³³²

Cornell and Starr analyze the region’s circumstances and emphasize the importance of the elimination of the frozen conflicts for the sake of the region’s security and prosperity.³³³

“Conflicts in the region are strong contributing factors to the deficit in governance, slowness of economic development, widespread poverty and the rise of transnational threats including organized crime and radicalism in the region. Without addressing the conflicts, the underlying cause of the security deficit in the Caucasus, there can be little hope for a stable, peaceful and prosperous Caucasus.”³³⁴

These unresolved conflicts also contain the risk of renewed hostilities, new immigration flows and pose threat across the South Caucasus by opening a convenient ground for transnational crime.³³⁵ Within this perspective, any kind of regional destabilization and unrest might threaten the security of the EU’s border, and the spillover effects of these turmoils might further pose serious challenges for the EU’s internal security as well as international security.

International security mostly reflects how the human collectivities relate to each other in terms of threats and vulnerabilities.³³⁶ Though proximity has still a powerful asset in security strategies of the nations in the system, since most states fear and clash with their immediate neighbours more than distant powers³³⁷, all states in the system are linked to each

³³² The Hazards of a Long, Hard Freeze, *The Economist*, August 19, 2004

http://www.economist.com/node/3110979?story_id=3110979, accessed on 04.12.2012

³³³ Svante E. Cornell and Frederich S. Starr, “The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Silk Road Paper*, June 2006

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8

³³⁵ Elkhan Nuriyev, “Azerbaijan and the European Union: New Landmarks of Strategic Partnership in the South Caucasus-Caspian Basin”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol.8 No.2, 2008, p.156

³³⁶ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, pp.10-11

³³⁷ John A. Vasquez, “Why Do Neighbours Fight? Proximity, Interaction or Territoriality”, *Journal of Peace Research* Vol.32 No.3, August 1995, pp.277-293; and Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p.11

other on a “global web of security interdependence”.³³⁸ Security interdependence is observed more intensely among the states inside such geographically diverse “regional clusters”, called as security complexes, than among the states outside.³³⁹ As Buzan defines, a security complex is “a set of states whose major security perception and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot be analyzed or resolved apart from one another.”³⁴⁰ In the South Caucasian case, the security of the region, which has also significant effects on the EU’s security, is closely linked with the national security obtainment of the three newly independent states.

Buzan and Waever categorizes the post-Soviet territories under four different sub-regions comprising the Baltic states, the Western group of states, Central Asia and Caucasus, which have security concerns related to each others in the subcomplex.³⁴¹ These “regional clusters” have shared vertical and horizontal security problems in interrelated or intersected matters on national and global levels such as secessionist conflicts as in Georgia and Moldova, or Russian involvement to their national policies, or wider threats as terrorism and illegal trafficking.³⁴² The Caucasus is considered as a subcomplex by having two parts as North Caucasus in Russian Federation and South Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia with their long-standing violent ethnic conflicts.³⁴³ The security concerns of these states in the regional security subcomplex either unify them under some cooperation, i.e the basic logic of the GUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova) to balance the Russian overweight in the CIS structure, or separate and alienate them i.e. the Armenian’s search for Russian assistance to survive in the region.

Though these three South Caucasian states are mostly defined as a regional group of states who have a complicated relationship, they generally follow different paths in their foreign policy preferences and advocate different discourses rooted from their national policies and interests. Therefore, regarding only the regional labeling might mislead the assessments about the degree of each country’s political, economic and security challenges and realities. The EU’s approach to the region has generally been under comprehensive

³³⁸ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p.11

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.10-11

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p.12

³⁴¹ Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.397

³⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.397-423

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.419-421

regional framework and initiatives, such as the Wider Black Sea Regional Cooperation or in the Eastern Partnership; and its instruments, like TACIS, are coordinated for the whole region labeled as “post-Soviet area”.³⁴⁴ This perception derives from the fact that the Caucasus region presents the high level of interdependence in matters related to regional conflicts, multitude ethnic composition as a shared part of the history of territorial occupation and secessions as well as economic variables, particularly on the energy and transportation routes.³⁴⁵ Although this regional dynamic requires a holistic perspective of the region problems, an effective assessment should be supplemented with the sub-regional variables in order to understand the changes of preferences and own dynamics of each country within the process. Therefore, in order to outline a comprehensive and effective approach towards the region, the EU should consider the region’s variables both on a broader extent, especially the relations with regional and international players, and on each country’s own.

The interdependencies between the conflicts for the security of the region as a whole and the reflections of Russian factors over the growth of these conflicts are clearly underlined in the Georgian National Security Security document as well:

“... the military aggression by the Russian Federation worsened the security environment in the Caucasus region as a whole. In addition, the instability in the North Caucasus and the unresolved conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh both negatively impact Georgia’s security environments. The creation of a peaceful and cooperative environment in the Caucasus region would pay positive dividends for the security of Georgia.”³⁴⁶

Mapping the interdependence is an important start point for the regional actors to assess their interests and strategies. The spiral effects of the Georgian separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, along with the instability in Nagorno-Karabakh should be taken into consideration as both influencing the neighbours and also being influenced by the

³⁴⁴ Dov Lynch, “The EU: Towards a Strategy”, in Dov Lynch (ed.), *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU_ Chaillot Papers* No.65, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2003, pp.179-180

³⁴⁵ Licinia Simao and Maria Raquel Freire, “The EU’s Neighbourhood Policy and The South Caucasus: Unfolding New Patterns of Cooperation”, *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* Vol.2 No.4, Autumn 2008, pp.225-227.

³⁴⁶ National Security Concept of Georgia
<http://www.mod.gov.ge/files/cfgezyvjwheng.pdf>, accessed on 01.05.2012

regional and global power's policies in the region.³⁴⁷ The domestic policies of the South Caucasian states are interlinked with the externally driven inputs in their decision making processes by putting pressure on the local actors in their security calculations and their political choices and actions.³⁴⁸

Although the Caucasus states were previously weak and unstable, after gaining their independence, they gradually became capable of providing security through cooperation with their European and American partners in the joint programs to fight against terrorism, trafficking and in peacekeeping.³⁴⁹ The increased international cooperation with these countries enable them to strength their policies on providing and controlling security problems. In this context, it can be claimed that the EU's role in strengthening the democratic values through its instruments in these countries can be an effective method to settle the regional conflicts.

All these dynamics led the EU to become more aware of the region's conflicts since the worsening situation has crucial effects over the EU's security, stability and prosperity. The EU's interests in the region mainly refer to the security, energy and democracy issues along with many challenges such as separatism, territorial disputes, regional arms race, transnational organized crime, migration, human trafficking.³⁵⁰ Even though these complex and interconnected problems set major obstacles and challenges for the EU in the regional affairs, the South Caucasian conflicts might also be an opportunity for the EU to compensate the Balkan failure and demonstrate its ability to act as an autonomous global security actor who can strengthen regional security and stability in its neighbourhood.³⁵¹ However, this is a challenging task for the EU, and the EU is mostly remained incapable or mainly unwilling, or both, to articulate its strategy in the region in a clear and coherent way.³⁵²

³⁴⁷ Licinia Simao and Maria Raquel Freire, "The EU's Neighbourhood Policy and The South Caucasus: Unfolding New Patterns of Cooperation", *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* Vol.2 No.4, Autumn 2008, pp.227-229

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.227-229

³⁴⁹ Leila Alieva, "EU and the South Caucasus", *Center for Applied Policy Research (C.A.P) Discussion Paper*, 2006, p. 1

³⁵⁰ Irina Pop, "The Assesment of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the South Caucasus: What the European Union Can Do?", *Eurolimes* Vol.7, 2009, p.23

³⁵¹ Tracey C. German, "Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus", *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.371

³⁵² Irina Pop, "The Assesment of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the South Caucasus: What the European Union Can Do?", *Eurolimes* Vol.7, 2009, pp.22-23

II.I.III. THE EU'S ENERGY SUPPLY CONCERNS

The Caucasus is a very important area for accessing the Central Asia's natural resources and gas reserves. The South Caucasus, by connecting two seas - the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea, provides a convenient transit route from the Central Asia's oil and gas resources in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to Europe.³⁵³ Central Asia and Caspian Sea have much greater natural gas and oil than the Mexican Gulf and Kuwait have.³⁵⁴ Therefore, the aim of reaching those resources and to share the wealth might trigger the restrained national ambitious, individual interests and might also re-activate the historical claims and imperialistic feelings.³⁵⁵ The South Caucasus region, geo-economically and geo-strategically, is a crucial area that also contains many divergent ethnic orientations and politically unstable environment.

The EU's growing interest in the diversification of the energy supplies has also diverted the EU's attention towards to a closer cooperation with the Caucasian states. The convenient geographic location on the crossroads of major East-West transportation routes makes Caucasus more attractive in the trade, military and communication issues.³⁵⁶

The energy issue has constantly been presented almost in all the EU documents, Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCAs), Country Strategy Paper (CSPs), Action Plans (APs), Regional programs and initiatives, as Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA), Interstate Oil and Gas Transportation to Europe (INOGATE) or Baku Process.³⁵⁷ The importance of the Caspian reserves has also been indicated in the Commission's Communication on energy policy for the enlarged Union.

“As highlighted in the Commission's Green Paper in the Security of Energy Supply, the European Union has a specific interest in the extensive oil and gas reserves of the Caspian Basin which will be, in the future, contribute to the security of supply in

³⁵³ Ibid., p.24

³⁵⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Büyük Satranç Tahtası*, İnkılap: Ankara, 1997, p.177

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p.177

³⁵⁶ Leila Alieva, “EU and the South Caucasus”, *Center for Applied Policy Research (C.A.P) Discussion Paper*, 2006, p. 1

³⁵⁷ Irina Pop, “The Assesment of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the South Caucasus: What the European Union Can Do?”, *Eurolimes* Vol.7, 2009, p.24

Europe... Indeed, secure and safe export routes for Caspian oil and gas will be important for the EU's security of energy supply as well as crucial for the development (economic but also social and political) of the Caspian region."³⁵⁸

As also indicated in the ESS, energy dependency is a special concern of the EU which is the world's largest importer of oil and gas with an incremental rise in consumption predicted to 70% in 2030.³⁵⁹ Not only is the Europe's consumption, indeed, the global energy consumption is predicted to enhance in 2030.³⁶⁰ Nevertheless, when comparing the future estimated figures, Europe's production does not seem to cover the future necessity of the continent.³⁶¹ On the other hand, the production of the former Soviet Union countries (excluding ex-Soviet but now European Union Member States) is estimated to uprise in 2030 while EU's regressing.³⁶² The EU's increased need for energy imports from non-member countries has become a distinctive feature of its energy policy. Statistically, more than half of the Union's consumption (54.1%) in 2010 came from external sources.³⁶³ The individual Member States' productions have been marked by a significant reduction, i.e. the United Kingdom's production, as the highest producing country, decreased to 17.8% from 28.7% of the EU's total production of primary energy between 2000-2010.³⁶⁴

In 2008 Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy has also signified the importance of energy security in a more dependent and complex world. The EU has clearly declared its concerns over the energy consumption and production inconsistency within the Union, and designated its response strategy combining internal and external dimensions.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁸ European Commission, Communication on the Development of Energy Policy for the Enlarged European Union, its Neighbours and Partner Countries, Brussels, 26.05.2003, p.12

³⁵⁹ Council of European Union, A Secure Europe in a Better World European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003

³⁶⁰ BP Energy Outlook 2030: January 2012, <http://www.bp.com/energyoutlook2030>, accessed on 26.04.2012

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ European Commission Eurostat, Energy Production and Imports, Data from August 2012 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Energy_production_and_imports, accessed on 12.03.2013

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

Subsequently, the largest producers of primary energy were France with 16.2% and German with 15.8% of the total production in 2010. The UK experienced the largest reduction with production falling by 122.2 million toe; then Poland was recorded as the second largest decline in production (11.9 million toe). Ibid.

³⁶⁵ European Council, "Report on the Implementation of European Security Strategy-Providing Security in a Changing World", Brussels, 11 December 2008

“Concerns about energy dependence have increased over the last five years. Declining production inside Europe means that by 2030 up to 75% of our oil and gas will have to be imported. This will come from a limited number of countries, many of which face threats to stability. We are faced therefore with an array of security challenges, which involve the responsibility and solidarity of all Member States.”³⁶⁶

In that respect, the importance of the developments in neighbouring countries, regarding the democratic development and investments in “source countries” as well as transit countries like Turkey or Ukraine, have become more essential for the EU’s energy interests.³⁶⁷ Therefore, the EU declares its desire to address the achievement of the goals for diversification of energy and transit routes along with good governance, rule of law and investment in the source countries through enhancing its engagement in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Africa.³⁶⁸

After 2009 Russian-Ukrainian gas crisis, the EU decided to improve its internal alternatives and took some protective measures, imposing an obligation on Member States to maintain minimum stock of crude oil and petroleum products.³⁶⁹ These measures would mitigate the negative consequences of a crisis, and the coordination mechanism among Member States would enable the Union to react uniformly and immediately.³⁷⁰ “Building reliable partnership with supplier, transit and consumer countries” is seen as another way to decrease the negative consequences and risks rooted from the EU’s energy dependency.³⁷¹ Although Russia still has the leading role as the main supplier of the crude oil and natural gas³⁷², the Union is in search for alternative routes and sources in order to protect its energy security. In this respect, the South Caucasian countries are seen as significant partners that would enable the Union to address alternative sources and transit routes. However, instability and disorder in the oil-rich regions and their transit routes, such as in Afghanistan and in South

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ European Commission Eurostat, Energy Production and Imports, Data from August 2012 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Energy_production_and_imports, accessed on 12.03.2013

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² For further information see table 3 in European Commission Eurostat, Energy Production and Imports, Data from August 2012 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Energy_production_and_imports, accessed on 12.03.2013

Caucasus countries, have served Russian interests; increasing the dependency on Russian resources.

The European Parliament has also emphasized the importance of energy security and the Union's geopolitical independence of energy sources. The EP stated: "ensuring consistency and coherence in the EU's external energy relations with key producer, transit and consumer countries is of critical importance [...] and strategic and political coordination among Member States in negotiations with powerful energy suppliers in third countries is essential".³⁷³ They also emphasized the importance of "strengthening the external dimension of energy policy and taking a unified stance in order to increase diversification of energy sources and routes, enhance security of supply and support sustainable production and consumption."³⁷⁴

In contrast to the Gulf region's energy resources which are mainly developed by national petroleum companies, Caspian energy resources stand for significant opportunities with their new capacity as being Eurasian energy belt and also represent a source of petroleum that are open to the commercial development of international firms.³⁷⁵ This is an important dimension to attract the many regional and international players in the region as well as the EU.

The region can be labeled as an area of great powers' competition on energy matters and a subject of rivalry, between Russia and the USA, and also between the regional powers, Turkey and Iran.³⁷⁶ Azerbaijan's vast oil reserves and the control over the oil routes from the Caspian basin have become a source of competition among the players in the region.³⁷⁷ The complexity of this multilevel relation among the actors that are involved in the region has

³⁷³ European Parliament Resolution of 12 June 2012 on Engaging in Energy Policy Cooperation with Partners Beyond our Borders: A Strategic Approach to Secure, Sustainable and Competitive Energy Supply, Strasbourg, 12 June 2012

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2012-0238+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>, accessed on 12.03.2013

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ S. Neil MacFarlane and Claude Zullo, "Petroleum and Politics in the Caucasus: New Wine in Old Bottles?" Friedemann Müller and Claude Zullo (ed.) *The European Union and The Caucasus Region: Oil, Interests and Influence*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, December 1998, pp.22-25

³⁷⁶ Elkhan Nuriyev, "Azerbaijan and the European Union: New Landmarks of Strategic Partnership in the South Caucasus-Caspian Basin", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol.8 No.2, 2008, pp164-165 and Irina Pop, "The Assessment of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the South Caucasus: What the European Union Can Do?", *Eurolimes* Vol.7, 2009, p.24

³⁷⁷ Havva Kök, "The Effects of the Caspian Pipeline Issue on the Stability of the Caucasus", Nurçin Ateşoğlu Günay and Fuat Aksu (ed.), *The Prospects for Cooperation and Stability in the Caucasus*, Foundation for Middle East and Balkan Studies (OBİV) İstanbul: Üsküdar, Joint Conference Series No.2, March 2005, p.33

affected the EU's strategic thinking about the region and make the EU to play a more cautious strategy towards the region. Therefore, the EU should evaluate the fragile balances in the region without jeopardizing its relations with the other actors in the region. This might be a crucial test case for the EU to prove its capabilities and strengths as a global actor, not only on the security related issues, but also on the energy transportation, investment, development and trade issues in the region.

Being both a resource rich area and a transit corridor for carrying petroleum and gas to Europe by counterweighting dependence on Persian Gulf oil and Russian gas supplies gives the South Caucasus an important strategic place in the international arena.³⁷⁸ The potential of being an alternative energy supply and having important transportation facilities due to its geographic location cannot be underestimated for the EU's future plans and projects regarding the area. The region is becoming a more attractive place for foreign direct investment, especially for multinational oil companies. One of the world's leading energy resource and project development company's then vice president, John Maresca, clearly emphasized the importance of the Central Asia oil and gas reserves and the interlinked political problems in the region's political developments in achieving those objectives:

“I would like to focus today on three issues. First, the need for multiple pipeline routes for Central Asian oil and gas resources. Second, the need for U.S. support for international and regional efforts to achieve balanced and lasting political settlements to the conflicts in the region. Third, the need for structured assistance to encourage economic reforms and the development of appropriate investment climates in the region.... One major problem has yet to be resolved: how to get the region's vast energy resources to the markets where they are needed. Central Asia is isolated. Their natural resources are landlocked, both geographically and politically.. Each of the countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia faces difficult political challenges. Some have unsettled wars or latent conflicts.”³⁷⁹

In his speech, he also mentioned about the US plans for the regional and international bases, which showed the importance of the region for gaining more economic power with specific reference to two major infrastructure projects that seek to meet the need for an

³⁷⁸ Elkhan Nuriyev, “Azerbaijan and the European Union: New Landmarks of Strategic Partnership in the South Caucasus-Caspian Basin”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol.8 No.2, 2008, p.156

³⁷⁹John J. Maresca, “US Interests in the Central Asian Republics”, Statement of John J. Maresca, Vice President of International Relations, Unocal Corporation, February 12 1998
<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/51/120.html>, accessed on 26.04.2012

additional export capacity.³⁸⁰ Internal political stability is a precondition for the development and implementation of the energy projects, and therefore, the conflict resolution process in the region is a significant prerequisite both for political stability as well as for the security of energy export routes.³⁸¹ It is obvious that the security of the production and transportation of petroleum is inseparable from the region's overall security matter.³⁸² Therefore, the resolution of long-lasting conflicts in the region would not only bring security and stability in the region, but also contribute to the region's countries internal order with prosperity in the long term.

As Maresca also emphasizes there is a strong link between the development of pipeline and security issues in the Caucasus.³⁸³ Pipeline construction and control over the routes are not only a matter of economic problems, but new corridors also mean a fertile basis for trade and economic power.³⁸⁴ This close link affects and directs the energy investment strategies of actors around the question of providing a stable and sustainable environment. Therefore, the resolution of the region's intractable conflicts becomes a necessary requirement for the development of the future projects and the new investments in the region. Unless well-established solutions are reached, these long-standing ethno-political tensions might broaden the conflicts' scope, and the ongoing disputes over the oil might further accelerate the regional tension.³⁸⁵

Azerbaijan's oil and gas resources reinforce the importance of Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) route that is designed to bypass the Russia by crossing over Georgian territory.³⁸⁶ Rising tension over Iranian's nuclear program and Russian's proactive use of energy as a political tool, increase the significance of the region reserves and Georgia's importance as a key transit state for oil and gas transportation.³⁸⁷ Therefore,

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Elkhan Nuriyev, "Azerbaijan and the European Union: New Landmarks of Strategic Partnership in the South Caucasus-Caspian Basin", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol.8 No.2, 2008, p.156

³⁸² S. Neil MacFarlane and Claude Zullo, "Petroleum and Politics in the Caucasus: New Wine in Old Bottles?" Friedemann Müller and Claude Zullo (ed.) *The European Union and The Caucasus Region: Oil, Interests and Influence*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, December 1998, p.21

³⁸³ John J. Maresca, "US Interests in the Central Asian Republics", Statement of John J. Maresca, Vice President of International Relations, Unocal Corporation, February 12 1998

<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/51/120.html>, accessed on 26.04.2012

³⁸⁴ Havva Kök, "The Effects of the Caspian Pipeline Issue on the Stability of the Caucasus", Nurçin Ateşoğlu Günay and Fuat Aksu (ed.), *The Prospects for Cooperation and Stability in the Caucasus*, Foundation for Middle East and Balkan Studies (OBİV) İstanbul: Üsküdar, Joint Conference Series No.2, March 2005, pp.33-34

³⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.36-39

³⁸⁶ Elkhan Nuriyev, "Azerbaijan and the European Union: New Landmarks of Strategic Partnership in the South Caucasus-Caspian Basin", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* Vol.8 No.2, 2008, p.166

³⁸⁷ Nicu Popescu, "Europe's Unrecognised Neighbours: The EU in Abkhazia and South Ossetia", Centre for European Polict Studies *CEPS Working Document* No. 260/March 2007, p.5

Georgia and the other countries in the wider context will become more important in terms of their locations to facilitate the transportation of Azerbaijan's and Caspian vast oil and gas resources through opening new channels. In that circumstance, Georgia becomes crucial for the transportation route since Armenia and Iran are excluded from the possible candidacy for carrying the oil from the Turkish Mediterranean coast to Europe.³⁸⁸ The projects that would facilitate to access the Asian energy resources without Russia can diminish the dependency on Russia and Iran in the region. In this sense, the importance of the South Caucasus countries will be increased for the European countries. The gas supply interruption after 2008 Georgian-Russian war and afterwards the Russian-Ukrainian gas supply crisis in 2009 clearly showed the importance of the Southern energy corridor and its key project, Nabucco pipeline, in the European diversification debate.³⁸⁹

II.II. CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCAUS

To some extent, the Cold War's demise has diminished the interstate, regional conflicts in the traditional meaning since the dissolution of the bipolar system will no longer be able to provide one of the conflicting sides an external aid or assistance by the superpowers.³⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War's alliance system introduced more uncertain and changeable bilateral diplomatic relations. New countries established in the former Soviet territory, faced with many possible confrontation matters, such as border disputes, and ethnically based grievances or political struggles among local groups.³⁹¹ Furthermore, the leaders in these mature governments who were inexperienced in international diplomacy and in managing such conflicts without coercion³⁹², intensified the

³⁸⁸ Svante E. Cornell, "Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in the Caucasus and Central Asia", *Perception Journal of International Affairs* Vol.4 No.2, June-August 1999

³⁸⁹ Stefan Meister, "A New Core for the EU South Caucasus Policy", Eastern Partnership Community, 18 November 2010
<http://www.easternpartnership.org/publication/2010-11-18/new-core-eu-south-caucasus-policy>, accessed on 23.11.2012

³⁹⁰ Louis Kriesberg, "Regional Conflicts in the Post-Cold War Era: Causes, Dynamics and Modes of Resolution", Michael T. Klare (ed.), *World Security: Challenges for a New Century*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994, pp.161-162

³⁹¹ Ibid., pp.161-162

³⁹² Ibid., pp.161-162

level of confrontation. Consequently, it was getting difficult to reach a common peaceful solution for these disputes.

With the introduction of new dynamics in world politics, comprising new concepts or re-interpretations of the old ones, actors' preferences on implementing their foreign policies have gained new orientations. However, the ethnic factors are not diluted in the conflicts, even they have become more tangible in the new world political order. New elites in the newly emerged states confronted with a major task of state-building in which mature liberalization process made these states more vulnerable to the intra level confrontations in their territories. The CFSP has provided the EU important mechanisms to develop and consolidate democratic norms and values in these newly independent states.³⁹³ These states have relatively unstable democratic regimes, and have to strengthen their political and economic settlements by both institutional arrangements and infrastructural investments in order to become capable enough to undertake political and economic reforms. However, both for the regional actors as well as the external players involved in the region, mainly the Russian factor in the post-Soviet territory as the successor of the Soviet empire, stands as the most challenging aspect for the political and economic developments of the region.

II.II.I. GEORGIA

Georgia has consisted of one autonomous oblast (South Ossetia) and two autonomous republics (Abkhazia and Ajara) in its internationally recognized borders. Georgia has a very fragile and divided ethnic composition in its territory. Apart from vast ethnic divergences, there have also been internal sub-divisions that stimulate deeper divisions in the country.³⁹⁴

In such ethnically divergent societies, as Georgia, there can be potential threats which might be easily incited from even the slightest tension among the groups. Demands for the cultural preservation by an ethnic group can lead to a competition between ethnic groups in multi-ethnic societies. When these demands are not realized or even are blocked by another group who are concerned with its own cultural security, the demanding group can apply

³⁹³ European Union Foreign and Security Policy Official website
http://europa.eu/pol/cfsp/index_en.htm, accessed on 25.02.2013

³⁹⁴ National Minorities and the State in Georgia, Conference Report, August 2006
http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2006/0608Georgia_Minorities.pdf, accessed on 02.05.2012

defensive actions to protect the maintenance of its differentiated values, such as the guarantees for the use of its native language or the freedom to practice a specific national religion.³⁹⁵ As Cotter indicates, increasing emotional fears, mistrust and sense of a threat lead to the escalation of cultural competition and the competition becomes zero-sum in nature in which even a slightest dispute might incite the emotional fears and acts as a justification for retaliation.³⁹⁶ As in the Georgian case, increased nationalist movements and discourses in multi-ethnic societies expose counter actions among minority groups in order to guarantee their own survival in an oppressing environment.

Cotter defines the *de facto* anarchy as one of the structural conditions for the development of the inter-ethnic security dilemma.³⁹⁷ This refers to a situation in which a state lacks the will or the institutional capacity to protect the ethnic groups in its territories, and therefore, ethnic groups find themselves in a self-help environment and they try to enhance their security while undermining the security of other groups.³⁹⁸ If a state is not capable enough to exercise sufficient assurance for the survival of the minority groups, or is in the institutionalizing process or in disarray, then this situation might lead to search for full statehood of the minority groups.³⁹⁹

In the early 1990, Georgia had politically unstable environment in which mistrust and cultural competition increased and this eventually escalated into violent conflicts among the Georgian government and its two separatist ethnic regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgian nationalist assertion and its cultural dominance in social and political implementations were perceived as threatening and disturbing among the ethnic minorities who demanded the preservation of their traditional autonomy status.⁴⁰⁰ After Georgian independence, Gamsukhardia's policies over the minorities and the abolishment of their status provided a convenient basis to confirm the fears of the minority groups and revealed the tensions between the groups.

³⁹⁵ John M. Cotter, "Cultural Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict in Georgia", *The Journal of Conflict Studies* Vol.19 No.1, Spring 1999

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ The other conditions can be counted as; demographic fears of extinction, illegitimate borders and the availability of the means to fight.

Stuart J.Kaufmann, "Spiralling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War", *International Security* Vol.21 No.2, Fall 1996, p.113, cited in John M. Cotter, "Cultural Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict in Georgia", *The Journal of Conflict Studies* Vol.19 No.1, Spring 1999

³⁹⁸ John M. Cotter, "Cultural Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict in Georgia", *The Journal of Conflict Studies* Vol.19 No.1, Spring 1999

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

Starting in the late 1980s and in the early 1990s, the presidency of Zviad Gamsakhurdia's nationalistic pressure on unity dominated the political discourse and consequently, ethnic minority groups were almost entirely neglected or treated as guests on the Georgian territory.⁴⁰¹ Throughout the 1990s, President Shevardnadze attempted to favor a more unified and conciliatory approach to nationhood and minorities' existence, by proclaiming himself as the protector of national minority groups.⁴⁰² However, this could not also reconcile the conflicting groups and did not cease the tension between government and the minorities.

The discourses of Georgian policy-makers in the nation-building created anxiety among the ethnic groups during the transition period. Georgian leaders' blustering and overwhelming policies frightened the ethnic minorities with the chauvinistic rhetoric of Georgian nationalism.⁴⁰³ These concerns nourished the separatist movements in Ossetia and Abkhazia which also enabled Russia to interfere in the movements.⁴⁰⁴ The Georgia's failure to provide political consolidation among the Georgians themselves was another problem in the country. Domestic political struggle over the competence, especially Gamsakhurdia's dictatorial policies, led to civil strife among Georgian political elites and their clan and region-based supporters.⁴⁰⁵

Civil wars and Russian's uncooperative policies after Georgian independence, such as cutting the economic ties with Georgia as a reaction to Georgian refusal to join the CIS, led the country into a sharper depression.⁴⁰⁶ These developments paved the way for barter and corruption that replaced practically all other economic exchange activities.⁴⁰⁷ International communications dropped to trivial levels that led the country isolated and increased emigration primarily to Russia for better living conditions.⁴⁰⁸ Georgian economy was affected from these serious challenges which made harder for Georgians both to sustain a working economic structure in the country and to attract foreign business investment and economic aid to the country.

⁴⁰¹ Johanna Popjanesvski, "Minorities and the State in the South Caucasus: Assessing the Protection of National Minorities in Georgia and Azerbaijan", Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, September 2006, pp.27-30

⁴⁰² Ibid., pp.27-30

⁴⁰³ William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire: Russia, Central Asia and Transcaucasus*, Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1995, pp.84-85

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.84-85

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., pp.84-85

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., pp.84-87

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., pp.86-87

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., pp.86-87

After the Rose Revolution in 2003, the policy orientation of the country acquired more Western dimensions. The new president Saakashvili's discourses clearly indicated that the country had a main priority to become a member of the EU and NATO. After his election, on his first visit to Brussels, he clearly emphasized this intention as follows:

“I believe that if present positive trends in Georgia remain effective, then in the period somewhere between three or four years we'll be ready in terms of criteria for EU membership. Of course it will take time. Of course it will take long procedures. I'm realistic about that. But I'm also convinced that Georgia could be in good shape in three to four years if we solve those problems and consolidate our statehood the way we are doing right now.”⁴⁰⁹

In his speech, Saakashvili also emphasized that Georgia would contribute to the EU's stability as a “frontline partner” in the fight against terrorism and would also be a vital partner for enhancing the bloc's energy security.⁴¹⁰

The emphasis on the Western partnership for Georgian national security, stability and development has been also verbalized in the Georgian National Security Security document:

“Broadening the integration processes in Europe is important for the security of Georgia. Georgia is a part of the European and Euro-Atlantic space. Therefore, the expansion eastward of the NATO and the European Union is important for Georgia.”⁴¹¹

The importance of the economic cooperation and the development of further regulatory policies with the support of the international partners are also indicated in the national document for the sake of the Georgian security and prosperity in the long term.

“For the stable and secure development of the country, it is crucially important to maintain high long-term economic growth; this is achieved through the adaptation of the free-market principles in the economy, strict fiscal discipline and a healthy

⁴⁰⁹ “Georgia: Saakashvili Pressures Brussels for Closer Ties”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, April 07, 2004 <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1052208.html>, accessed on 01.05.2012

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ National Security Concept of Georgia <http://www.mod.gov.ge/files/cfgeyvzjwheng.pdf>, accessed on 01.05.2012

monetary policy. Open partnership, free trade and economic relationship with all nations and international entities-especially the European Union, the United States and the countries in the region- are important choices that Georgia has made.⁴¹²

The peaceful end of the Abashidze regime in Ajara provided the courage and optimistic atmosphere which were necessary to advert the country's future Western projects. When Mikheil Saakashvili was in control over its territory, his policy towards minorities and autonomous regions were dominated by the desire to control them under national territorial integrity.⁴¹³ Ajaria issue was perceived as an example of an autonomy decrease following the centralization of power and this encouraged Saakashvili to replicate this success in the other two autonomous regions within their territories.⁴¹⁴ However, Ajara issue had historically differentiated dynamics and political conditions in Ajara were different than in Abkhazia (Sukhumi) and South Ossetia (Tshkhinvali).⁴¹⁵

Ajara region has strategic importance for Georgia in both economic and military terms. As locating in the Black Sea coast border between Georgia and Turkey, it enjoys the strategic importance for Georgia. The Batumi port and Sarpi custom station guarantee its importance as a transit zone for the entire Caucasus.⁴¹⁶ Abashidze's close relations with the local Russian military base, whose ranks are mainly recruited from the local population, plays also a crucial role in Georgia's security.⁴¹⁷

Political conditions in Ajara and the conflict motives have been different from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As indicated in the ICG Report, the successful settlement can be regarded as a product of the particular circumstances of the Ajara case and will not easily be repeatable for the South Ossetia and Abkhazia⁴¹⁸, which have different conflict dynamics. The region never sought independence based on national self-determination (its people are ethnic Georgians) and never fought an armed conflict with the central government, nevertheless they

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Johanna Popjanesvski, "Minorities and the State in the South Caucasus: Assessing the Protection of National Minorities in Georgia and Azerbaijan", Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, September 2006, pp.27-30

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., pp.27-30

⁴¹⁵ International Crisis Group ICG Europe Briefing, Saakashvili's Ajara Success: Repeatable Elsewhere in Georgia?, 18 August 2004
<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/untc/unpan018787.pdf>, accessed on 01.05.2012

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, pp.45-46

⁴¹⁸ International Crisis Group ICG Europe Briefing, Saakashvili's Ajara Success: Repeatable Elsewhere in Georgia?, 18 August 2004
<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/untc/unpan018787.pdf>, accessed on 01.05.2012

succeeded in establishing a power sharing arrangement with Tbilisi.⁴¹⁹ During Shevardnadze's time, Ajara's autonomy was less based on religion, identity and ideology than on the personal aspiration of the region's leader, Aslan Abashidze.⁴²⁰ Russia also played an ambitious but unhelpful role in the resolution process because the Russian's security interests in the region were mostly in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.⁴²¹ The area is distant from Russia and there is a lack of ethnic tension among its population, therefore, the Russian influence is mitigated in this area. On the other hand, both South Ossetian and Abkhazian conflicts had ethnic roots dated back to the 17-18 century and later on Soviet period- the preconditions for these conflicts were set when the borderlines of the autonomous Soviet republics were drawn.⁴²²

Saakashvili also mentioned the Russia's constructive role in Ajaria problem and made a conclusion that Russia's military presence would no longer be acceptable and that they should not meddle in the internal affairs of its immediate neighbours.⁴²³ However, this was an early and a very optimistic conclusion for the future of Russian policies in the region. Further developments and the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia precisely exhibited the continuing and determinant Russian influence in its near abroad.

Although Georgia had been so eager for further integration with Europe and being a part of the alliance, the EU was not convinced about the sustainability of the political developments in the region and had doubts on such a hasty process. Prodi summarizes the level of their relations with three South Caucasus states as;

“We start from the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that gives us plenty of room to increase our relations... the Commission intends to make a recommendation on the relationship of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Council will consider this matter further.”⁴²⁴

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Georgi Kamov, “EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas”, Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, p.59

⁴²³ “Georgia: Saakashvili Pressures Brussels for Closer Ties”, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, April 07, 2004 <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1052208.html>, accessed on 01.05.2012

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

In 2004, these three Caucasian states were included into the ENP structure and the prospect of becoming a Union member became more vague and tentative. With the political and economic assistance of the international organizations, Georgia has been trying to deal with its intractable conflicts which hinder the country's territorial integrity and stability.

Georgians' policy towards the two separatist minorities has been same in the framework of suppressing and reacting to their actions. Georgia regards the secessionist entities as a Russian political tool to weaken or destabilize the Georgian country, so they prefer to suppress them instead of cooperating with them.

II.II.I.I. ABKHAZIA

Abkhazia is an autonomous republic in Georgia located on the coast of the Black Sea and presents a very strategic area as being on the Georgia's only railroad linking to Russia and as having a lengthy coastal line, a tourism potential.⁴²⁵ It also has rich agricultural and mineral resources.⁴²⁶ Abkhazia established as a separate Soviet Socialist Republic in 1921, but later than in 1931, its status was downgraded and formally incorporated into Georgia as an autonomous republic.⁴²⁷

The Georgian policies towards the Abkhazian minorities create fear among the Abkhazians for their survival. Tbilisi's encouragement of Georgian migration to Abkhazia and the assertion of the Georgian language and culture primacy in the region created the sense of threat towards the Abkhazian minorities' identity.⁴²⁸ The overwhelming pressure of Georgian migration into the autonomous republic raised doubts about the "Georgianization of Abkhazia" and this fear was incited with the dissemination of Georgian cultural values in the region.⁴²⁹

On the other hand, Georgia also dealt with some difficulties to identify its own independence. The Georgian nationalism was so high that in 1978 when changes in the Soviet

⁴²⁵ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.76

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.76

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.76

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.77

⁴²⁹ A Georgian alphabet was imposed on Abkhazia and all native language schools were temporarily closed, as in the South Ossetia, whereas other national minorities in the Soviet Union were forced to adopt a Cyrillic alphabet. Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, pp.155-158

constitution had been discussing to amend the Georgian constitution for the removal of a clause which defines Georgian as the sole state language, to replace it with a clause giving equal status to Russian and any other languages in the republic, thousands of people took the streets to protest this change.⁴³⁰ At the end, the Russian government had to comply with public pressure and rejected any changes.⁴³¹

Georgian national identity was growing under the threat of both Russification policies and the minorities' requests in Georgia, and therefore, a little room was left for the development and participation of the minorities in Georgian society.⁴³² Furthermore, Georgian government had to fight against increased illegal economic activities in the parallel economy, corruption and shady economic activities in the country's economic system, which had also led harsh criticisms in Georgia.⁴³³ From 1992, the central government has experienced severe economic and political crises that caused a deterioration of the relations with minorities and the escalation of tension in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia.⁴³⁴

Abkhazians have opposed the Georgian polices over the ethnic Abkhaz minorities with increasingly forceful articulation of their autonomy and by reinforcing their links with Russia and the North Caucasian people.⁴³⁵ When Abkhaz intellectuals signed a letter to the USSR Supreme Soviet protesting against the influx of Georgians, assimilationist policies-including Georgiantion in schools and economic exploitation-, a Commission from Moscow arrived to assess the Abkhaz claims and endorsed some of these assertions.⁴³⁶ Shevardnadze, with more moderate attitude, made some concession for further cultural rights to prevent the ethnic bloodshed, however, these did not please both sides.⁴³⁷ While Abkhazians claimed that there was no fundamental change, Georgians (Mingrelians lived in Abkhazia) felt that with these concessions, excessive privilege was given to Abkhaz.⁴³⁸

Although in the Soviet era, the tension between autonomous Abkhazia and central government seemed to be under control, the independence of the Georgia after the dissolution of Soviet system released the tension. Abkhazians seek their independence by arguing that

⁴³⁰ Ibid., pp.154-155

⁴³¹ Ibid., pp.154-155

⁴³² Ibid., p.153

⁴³³ Ibid., pp.153-154

⁴³⁴ Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper No. 15*, February 2002, p. 12

⁴³⁵ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.77

⁴³⁶ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, pp.154-155

⁴³⁷ Ibid., pp.156-157

⁴³⁸ Ibid., pp.156-157

they have a democratic government, rule of law, defense capabilities and sufficient economy of a state.⁴³⁹ Abkhazia did not call for a direct Russian hegemony instead prefer to leave the door open to restructure its relations with Georgia on a federative basis, as had been the case before unification in 1931.

When Georgia declared its independence, Abkhaz made attempts to secede from Georgia and reinstated its 1925 constitution, which defined Abkhazia as an independent state.⁴⁴⁰ Georgia responded the attempt by deploying 3.000 Georgian troops and occupying a part of Abkhazia together with the capital city, Sukhumi.⁴⁴¹ In 1992, a war broke out in which Abkhazians found significant support from the North Caucasian, especially from Chechen fighters and also got the Russian's military and political support.⁴⁴²

In 1993, the UN issued Resolution 858 and decided to establish a United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), which aimed to ensure the compliance to the ceasefire agreement of 27 July 1993, to investigate reports of ceasefire violations, to resolve such incidents, and to report the implementation of these mandates.⁴⁴³ The ceasefire broke down again on 16 September 1993, and Abkhaz forces, with armed support from outside Abkhazia, launched attacks on Sukhumi and in few days Abkhaz side occupied Sukhumi.⁴⁴⁴

The conflict caused a damage of a vast area and massive number of internally displaced people (IDPs).⁴⁴⁵ In 1994, Moscow Agreement (the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces⁴⁴⁶) was signed and the parties agreed on the deployment of a separate peacekeeping force of the CIS to monitor the compliance of the ceasefire with UNOMIG that would monitor the implementation and observe the operation of the CIS force.⁴⁴⁷ With the

⁴³⁹ International Crisis Group, Abkhazia Today, Europe Today No.176, 15 September 2006

http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/176_abkhazia_today.ashx, accessed on 03.05.2012

⁴⁴⁰ Georgi Kamov, "EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas", Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, p.59

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., p.59

⁴⁴² Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper* No. 15, February 2002, p. 12, and Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.77

⁴⁴³ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 858, 24 August 1993.

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N93/466/03/IMG/N9346603.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed on 02.05.2012

⁴⁴⁴ United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia,

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomig/background.html>, accessed on 07.06.2012

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces, April 4, 1994

<http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/services/cds/agreements/pdf/geo1.pdf>, accessed on 02.05.2012

⁴⁴⁷ United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia,

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomig/background.html>, accessed on 07.06.2012

inclusion of the CIS peacekeeping forces in the conflict zone, Russia managed to increase its leverage in the conflict.

There are many different conflicting positions over the issue. While Abkhazia insists on full independence with a real self-government and internal sovereignty⁴⁴⁸, Georgia favors an autonomous membership in the asymmetric federation and recognizes Abkhazia as a subordinate part of a single Georgian state.⁴⁴⁹

Another major challenge between sides is the refugee issue. While Georgia endeavors the Georgian refugees' return to Abkhazia before negotiating the status of the Abkhazia, however, Abkhaz demands vice versa. As ICG Report on Abkhazia states that Abkhaz could not base their claims on the will of the majority in Abkhazia since they were then a minority according to the 1989 Soviet census.⁴⁵⁰ However, the demography cannot be treated strictly and can be shifted through violations and war. After the 1992-1993 war, Abkhaz did not only expel the Georgian troops, but also most of the Georgian population.⁴⁵¹ Before the expulsion of Georgians out of the Abkhazia, the ethnic Abkhaz population comprised less than Georgian ethnic minorities and if all refugees returned before reaching an agreement on their status, then they would outnumber again and most importantly the secessionist regime would have less legitimacy to speak on behalf of the entire Abkhaz population.⁴⁵²

A resolution or a middle way between the belligerent sides cannot still be reached. The rise in the Georgian military budget in 2005 was much higher than the other countries in the world, and therefore, this might create doubts about the Georgian government's sincerity for a peaceful resolution of the Abkhaz conflict.⁴⁵³ The 2008 war and afterwards, the Russian

⁴⁴⁸ A referendum held by Abkhazians most of the citizens voted for independence; however, the referendum was not recognized by Georgia. Georgi Kamov, "EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas", Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, pp.59-60

⁴⁴⁹ Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper* No. 15, February 2002, p. 13 and Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, pp.79-80

⁴⁵⁰ International Crisis Group, Abkhazia Today, Europe Today No.176, 15 September 2006 http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/176_abkhazia_today.ashx, accessed on 03.05.2012
According to 1989 Soviet census, Abkhazia's population is 525,061: 239,872 ethnic Georgians (45.7%), 93,267 ethnic Abkhaz (17.8%), 76,541 ethnic Armenians (14.6%), 74,914 ethnic Russians (14.3%), and 40,467 others (7.6%)

⁴⁵¹ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.67

⁴⁵² Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper* No. 15, February 2002, p. 13

⁴⁵³ International Crisis Group, Abkhazia Today, Europe Today No.176, 15 September 2006 http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/176_abkhazia_today.ashx, accessed on 03.05.2012

recognition of the independence of the two secessionist entities have confirmed these concerns and deepened the problems.

II.II.II. SOUTH OSSETIA

South Ossetia is another breakaway entity in Georgian territory. The Soviets created three autonomous regions in Georgia; Abkhazia was a full union republic in 1921, then demoted to an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), Ajara was also another ASSR within the border of the Soviet Republic of Georgia and South Ossetia was Autonomous Oblast (AO) in the Georgia.⁴⁵⁴ Among the three autonomous regions, South Ossetia had the lower status as Autonomous Oblast (AO), while the other two regions were labelled under Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR).⁴⁵⁵ North Ossetia was considered as the indigenous homeland of the Ossetians, hence the autonomous unit of the Ossetians within Georgia was given at a lower administrative level than North Ossetia.⁴⁵⁶

South Ossetia has less formal autonomy than Abkhazia enjoyed under the Soviet Union rule and has a more homogenous ethnic composition compared to the Abkhaz population in its autonomous region.⁴⁵⁷ Soviet's border delimitation separated the Ossetian people while the larger part of the ethnic Ossetians lived in the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic of the Russian Federation, a small part of the Ossetians lived in the South within the border of Georgia.⁴⁵⁸ Thus, the sense of separation from their ethnic broderens doubled with the increased Georgian cultural domination and with the declaration of Georgian

⁴⁵⁴ John M. Cotter, "Cultural Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict in Georgia", *The Journal of Conflict Studies* Vol.19 No.1, Spring 1999

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.143

⁴⁵⁷ Fewer than 20% of Abkhazia residents are ethnic Abkhaz while over 60% of those in South Ossetia are Ossetian.

Tanya Charlick-Paley with Phil Williams and Olga Olikier, "The Political Evolution of Central Asia and South Caucasus: Implications for Regional Security", in Olga Olikier and Thomas S Szayna (ed.), *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the US Army*, Santa Monica Calif.: RAND, 2003, p.37 http://books.google.com.tr/books?id=IXMQ_eTWT7gC&pg=PA159&dq=Cultural+Security+Dilemma+and+Ethnic+Conflict+in+Georgia&hl=tr&sa=X&ei=IGCmT4jFMOHj4QT1xaCCCO&ved=0CF0Q6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=Cultural%20Security%20Dilemma%20and%20Ethnic%20Conflict%20in%20Georgia&f=false, accessed on 06.05.2012

⁴⁵⁸ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, pp.73-74

independence, the fear of South Ossetians to separate from Russia became more evident in their political discourse.

During the USSR period, relations with the central government were relatively more stable due to the Soviet' supremacy and its control over its constituent parts. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the following Georgian nationalism, South Ossetians began to feel that they were detached from Russia, and thereby from North Ossetia.⁴⁵⁹ Even before the Georgian independence, South Ossetian leaders expressed their desire to secede from Georgia and join Russia, and therefore, the North Ossetia.⁴⁶⁰

The first tension dated back to 1988-89 when the Georgian nationalist movements gained power in the country and strained relations with the autonomous regions.⁴⁶¹ As Abkhazians, South Ossetia had problems with the increased Georgian nationalist rhetorics, so they applied for seceding from Georgian autonomy to administrate their own sovereignty.

In 1988, a Georgian law strengthening the position of the Georgian language was introduced, and then the leader of the Ossetian Popular Front addressed an open letter to the Abkhaz people which declared his support to their secessionist claims.⁴⁶² As a counter action, South Ossetians proposed to give equal status to Russian, Ossetian and Georgian languages in the oblast, as a consequence of this request, the tension escalated between the central government and Ossetians.⁴⁶³ Furthermore, the discourses on the unification with North Ossetia gained strength and they had frequently declared their desire to secede from Georgia and unified with North Ossetian brethren under Russian Federation.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁵⁹ Fatih Özbay, "Tarihsel Süreç İçerisinde Güney Osetya Sorunu", Bilge Adamlar Stratejik Araştırma Merkezi, 25 June 2008

http://www.bilgesam.org/tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1618:tarihsel-suerec-cerisinde-guene-y-ose-tya-sorunu&catid=171:analizler-kafkaslar, accessed on 06.05.2012

⁴⁶⁰ Tanya Charlick-Paley with Phil Williams and Olga Oliker, "The Political Evolution of Central Asia and South Caucasus: Implications for Regional Security", in Olga Oliker and Thomas S Szayna (ed.), *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the US Army*, Santa Monica Calif.: RAND, 2003, p.37

http://books.google.com.tr/books?id=IXMQ_eTWT7gC&pg=PA159&dq=Cultural+Security+Dilemma+and+Ethnic+Conflict+in+Georgia&hl=tr&sa=X&ei=IGCmT4jFMOHj4QT1xaCCCQ&ved=0CF0Q6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=Cultural%20Security%20Dilemma%20and%20Ethnic%20Conflict%20in%20Georgia&f=false, accessed on 06.05.2012

⁴⁶¹ Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper No. 15*, February 2002, p. 15

⁴⁶² Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.165

⁴⁶³ Ibid., p.165

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.165-170

In the following days, South Ossetia demanded for the upgrade of its status from the Autonomous Region (oblast) to the Autonomous Republic (the status previously enjoyed by Abkhazia).⁴⁶⁵ Afterwards, they adopted a declaration of sovereignty that demanded recognition from Russia as an independent subject of the USSR, and organized an election in which the new parliament subordinated itself directly to Moscow.⁴⁶⁶ Tbilisi's reaction to this action was the exclusion of the regional parties, including South Ossetians's parties, from national elections, and in 1990 Georgia abolished South Ossetia's distinct administrative entity status.⁴⁶⁷

In 1989-1991, while Georgian nationalists asserted the primacy of Tbilisi's authority, Georgian language and culture throughout the republic, Ossets claimed their autonomy and their links with North Ossetia.⁴⁶⁸ The demands of South Ossetians for independence and unification with North Ossetia were the main motive on their nationalistic discourses. Kokoev, South Ossetia's former *de facto* ruler actively negotiated with Russia on the South Ossetia's merger of North and accession to Russia.⁴⁶⁹ Kokoev had constantly stated that his country's self-styled independence had been just a temporary phase before formally unifying with Russia's North Ossetia region and the political goal of his life was to unite his people.⁴⁷⁰

North Ossetians were also not pleased with the political developments in the South Ossetia and they were in favor of unification, hence, they were not only enthusiastic to give their military support to the conflict, but also they were lobbying for Russia's active involvement in the conflict.⁴⁷¹ The Confederation of the Mountainous Peoples of the Caucasus was also sending volunteer fighters to North Ossetia to fight in the South.⁴⁷² In

⁴⁶⁵ Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper* No. 15, February 2002, p. 15

⁴⁶⁶ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.74

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.74

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.74

⁴⁶⁹ Ömer Kocaman, "Russian's Relations With Georgia Within The Context of The Russian National Interests Towards the South Caucasus in The Post-Soviet Era: 1992-2005", *USAK Yearbook* Vol.1 Year 2008, p.357

⁴⁷⁰ "A Year After the War, South Ossetia and Abkhazia Seek Different Paths", Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, August 6, 2009

http://www.rferl.org/content/A_Year_After_The_War_South_Ossetia_And_Abkhazia_Seek_Different_Paths/1794249.html, accessed on 01.05.2012

⁴⁷¹ Emil A. Pain, "Contagious Ethnic Conflicts and Border Disputes Along Russia's Southern Flank", in Rajan Menon, Yuri E. Federov and Ghia Nodia (ed.), *Russia, The Caucasus and Central Asia: 21st Security Environment*, New York: EastWest Institute, 1999, pp.185-186, cited in Ömer Kocaman, "Russian's Relations With Georgia Within The Context of The Russian National Interests Towards the South Caucasus in The Post-Soviet Era: 1992-2005", *USAK Yearbook* Vol.1 Year 2008, p.355

⁴⁷² Ömer Kocaman, "Russian's Relations With Georgia Within The Context of The Russian National Interests Towards the South Caucasus in The Post-Soviet Era: 1992-2005", *USAK Yearbook* Vol.1 Year 2008, p.356

addition to lobbying policies in Russia, North Ossetians were also aiming to push the Georgian government to concede South Ossetian independence by applying some direct blockades to constrain Georgian government, as cutting the pipeline routes off that were carrying Russian natural gas to Georgia.⁴⁷³

Tension exacerbated and Georgian nationalists, led by Gamsakhurdia, harshly reacted to the Ossetians' actions and convinced the government to organize a march on Tskhinvali to defend Georgian population.⁴⁷⁴ Russian forces backed the South Ossetians and prevented the Georgian mob from entering the Tskhinvali, however, this could not prevent the escalation of the conflict and the clashes continued.⁴⁷⁵ Gamsakhurdia's intensive nationalist discourses and political actions, like abolishing the autonomous status of Ossetia, also provided fertile ground to incite the tension and escalation of the conflict.⁴⁷⁶ Shevardnadze's policies towards the minorities were more conciliatory and strategic, but his regime was also unable to stop the fight that continued throughout 1992 with Georgian's attacks on Tskhinvali (South Ossetian capital).⁴⁷⁷

Since the fighting gradually intensified, the continued bombardment caused many casualties. The number of wounded IDPs increased all around the country. South Ossetians eventually gained advantage with direct support of the Russian and North Ossetian military forces.⁴⁷⁸

A ceasefire was reached in 1992 and a peacekeeping force from Georgian, South Ossetian and Russian peacekeeping forces which would be supervised by a Joint Control Commission (JCC), were set up.⁴⁷⁹ The ceasefire was not negotiated under the auspices of any international organization and Russian dominance in the peacekeeping force (PKF) was not negligible.⁴⁸⁰ This facilitated and legitimized the Russian military presence in the region, and Russia continued to press Georgia to resolve the question since no political solution has been

⁴⁷³ Ibid., p.356

⁴⁷⁴ Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper No. 15*, February 2002, p. 15

⁴⁷⁵ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.166

⁴⁷⁶ Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper No. 15*, February 2002, p. 15

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 15

⁴⁷⁸ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.74

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., pp.74-75

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.74-75

found.⁴⁸¹ This was a crucial issue for the Georgians; they interpreted the Russian's position on their territories as a claim for destabilizing their country. Increased Russian presence in the country in the name of providing security of the minorities strengthened the Georgian fears of Russian interference in their internal affairs.

In 1995, talks to settle the conflict began under OSCE auspices, with Russia's mediation. The main issue that was the political status of the South Ossetia remained unresolved since Georgia offered South Ossetia broad autonomy, while South Ossetians did not relinquish their *de facto* independence.⁴⁸²

In 2004, the ceasefire broke down when Saakashvili made an attempt to cut the funding base of the regime in South Ossetia and applied an economic blockade to back up the military operations.⁴⁸³ With serious casualties, Saakashvili withdrew the troops due to the strong international pressure, especially from Russia and the US.⁴⁸⁴ Saakashvili's policy over autonomous regions did not bring any positive resolution to the current situation and his another attempt to regain control over territory turned into a war between Russia and Georgia in 2008. This war led Russia to recognize the independence of two autonomous regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The tranquility in the region more or less provided with ceasefire among the conflicting parties crashed with a Georgian-Russian war in 2008. Basically two important events which incited the tension and revealed the violence again in 2008, could be emphasized. The first one was the Kosovo's declaration of independence, which triggered the ethnic nationalist practices and discourses on the international discussion again; and the second one was the NATO's decision that was taken on 2-4 April 2008 for the constant membership of Georgia and Ukraine that aggravated Russian's reaction.⁴⁸⁵ Russia evaluated the outcome by re-emphasizing her perception of further NATO's enlargement as a threat and urged them with the possible negative consequences of such a constant membership for both two countries by declaring that this would be a "strategic fault" that would have serious

⁴⁸¹ Ömer Kocaman, "Russian's Relations With Georgia Within The Context of The Russian Nationaş Interests Towards the South Caucasus in The Post-Soviet Era: 1992-2005", *USAK Yearbook* Vol.1 Year 2008, pp.356-357

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, p.357

⁴⁸³ Georgi Kamov, "EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas", Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, p.61

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.61

⁴⁸⁵ Cavid Veliev, Kafkasya'nın Güvenliđi Tehlikede, *Cumhuriyet: Strateji*, 18 Ağustos 2008, p.12

consequences for the European security.⁴⁸⁶ Russia was explicitly disturbed by NATO's eastern enlargement and also Georgian pro-Western policies in the region, hence, wanted to prevent Georgia from becoming a NATO member.⁴⁸⁷

II.II.II. ARMENIA & AZERBAIJAN / NAGORNO_KARABAKH

Armenian populated Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, located on Azerbaijan territorial borders, is regarded as one of the first ethno-political conflict erupted in the former Soviet territories. This conflict is rooted from the Russian's "divide and rule" policy that helps to strengthen the Russian leverage over Azerbaijan and Armenian Soviet Republics.⁴⁸⁸

The conflict's roots could be traced back to the 1920's Soviet border arrangement and the creation of the Mountainous Karabakh Autonomous Region (Oblast), and the Armenian aspiration to create a nation-state comprising the territories that existed historically among the Armenian population.⁴⁸⁹ Azerbaijan's policies over the cultural rights of Karabakh Armenians and their policies encouraging the Azeri settlement to convert the demographic balances in the oblast (Armenian percentage in 1921 was 94%, whereas this proportion became 76% in 1979) created the immediate grievance of the Karabakh Armenians in 1988.⁴⁹⁰ This perception led them to make several calls to Moscow for assistance and the unification with Armenia.⁴⁹¹ Armenians blamed the Azerbaijan government for demographic change by claiming that they were intentionally trying to manipulate the demographic characteristic of the region, as in the case of Nakhchivan where Armenians formed 15% of the population in the 1920, this number reduced to 1,4%.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁶ Yasemin Diril, "NATO Zirvesi Amacına Ne Kadar Ulaştı?", Bilge Adamlar Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi (BİLGESAM), 4 Nisan 2008

http://www.bilgesam.org/tr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=120:nato-zirvesi-amacna-ne-kadar-ulat&catid=122:analizler-guvenlik&Itemid=147, accessed on 04.12.2012

⁴⁸⁷ Cavid Veliev, Kafkasya'nın Güvenliği Tehlikede, *Cumhuriyet: Strateji*, 18 Ağustos 2008, p.12

⁴⁸⁸ Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper* No. 15, February 2002, pp.7-8

⁴⁸⁹ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, pp.65-66

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p.66

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., p.66

⁴⁹² Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.78

Gorbachev's policy, which brought a relative relaxation of tight Soviet rule, provides the Karabakh Armenians a chance to appeal for the recognition of the region's unification with Armenia.⁴⁹³ Especially after glassnot policy, in a freer environment, the number of sporadic incidents flourished and the numbers of letters sent for demanding the unification accelerated.⁴⁹⁴ In 1989, the Supreme Soviet of Armenia and the National Council of Karabakh declared the unification of Karabakh and Armenia, however, their demands for unification converted into a call for independence for Nagorno-Karabakh.⁴⁹⁵

Azerbaijan's Supreme Soviet annulled their autonomy as a response to their declaration for unification.⁴⁹⁶ The Karabakh Armenians held a referendum for independence in 1991 and then declared the independent Mountainous Karabakh Republic in 1992, however, any state, including Armenia, has not recognized this independence.⁴⁹⁷

In 1991, tension erupted between parties, involving also Soviet troops with Armenians. With the support of Armenian forces, in the mid-1992, Karabakh Armenians gained to control of the Nagorno-Karabakh area and also approximately 20% of the Azerbaijani territories.⁴⁹⁸ The establishment of Lachin corridor has a crucial significance for Armenia, since the corridor provides a land bridge from the region directly to Armenia.⁴⁹⁹

Refugees and IDPs problems can be also considered as another crucial problem in the conflict. Reciprocal human rights abuses towards the opposite sides' minorities in their territories caused serious migration flows. Armenians fled to Armenia, Karabakh and Russia, while many Azeris lived in Armenia, as well as Karabakh Azeris are compelled to emigrate to Azerbaijan.⁵⁰⁰ The Azeri population is ethnically cleaned in the occupied territories.⁵⁰¹ Almost

⁴⁹³ Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper No. 15*, February 2002, p.8

⁴⁹⁴ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.78

⁴⁹⁵ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.66

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.66

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.66

⁴⁹⁸ Natalie Sabanadze, "International Involvement in the South Caucasus", *ECMI Working Paper No. 15*, February 2002, p. 8

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.8-9

⁵⁰⁰ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.66

⁵⁰¹ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.61

1,5 million refugees and IDPs caused significant political and socioeconomic crisis, especially in Azerbaijan, where the number of IDPs consisted roughly 12-15% of its population.⁵⁰²

The regional balances have also affected the conflict's development. While Russia -as the mediator and also co-chair of the Minsk Group-, Armenia and Iran comprise one side; Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia comprise the other, more pro-Western side in the region. From 1989, Azerbaijan has imposed blockade of rail, road and energy links with Armenia, and Turkey has supported the blockade along its border with Armenia.⁵⁰³ This blockade has caused severe economic problems for the Armenian government since the policy of two neighbouring countries left Armenia geographically isolated in the region.⁵⁰⁴ Armenia is totally isolated from the oil and this isolation from the resources increase the Yerevan's fears that oil-rich Azerbaijan would held the economic and financial leverage to settle the conflict by force.⁵⁰⁵

Armenia has never formally engaged in war with Azerbaijan directly, but it has contributed financially and materially to Karabakh Armenis in their efforts and conflict. Turkey provided support to Azerbaijan, nevertheless, it has limited scale in terms of military training and economic pressure on Armenia since it has been under the pressure of both NATO members and mainly Russia.⁵⁰⁶ Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not only intensified the hostility with Azerbaijan, but also, while pushing Turkey to support the position of Azerbaijan, lefting Armenia more dependent on Moscow for its survival.⁵⁰⁷

Between 1988-1994 conflict interruptedly led to the escalation and continuous efforts to negotiate on ceasefire with a range of mediators, including Russia, Turkey, Iran, Western countries and international organizations remained fruitless and no political solution has been found yet.⁵⁰⁸ Although a ceasefire was signed in 1994, the Armenians refused to retreat from the occupied territories unless the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh was recognized and its

⁵⁰² Ibid., p.61

⁵⁰³ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.66

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., p.66

⁵⁰⁵ Tracey C. German, "Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus", *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.366

⁵⁰⁶ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, pp.66-67

⁵⁰⁷ William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire: Russia, Central Asia and Transcaucasus*, Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1995, p.78

⁵⁰⁸ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.67

security was guaranteed.⁵⁰⁹ The incompatible commitments on both sides made harder to achieve a solution on a mutual basis.

1996 OSCE Summit in Lisbon incited the tension since Azerbaijan managed to include a statement in the Lisbon summit document. The statement declared that the preservation of Azerbaijanian territorial integrity would be considered in the solution process, however, Armenia strongly rejected this on the ground that such statement would be considered as predetermining the status of Karabakh before any settlement reached.⁵¹⁰

“Three principles which should be formed of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was recommended by the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Group. These principles are supported by all Member States of the Minsk Group. 1) The territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia and Azerbaijan Republic; 2) legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh defined in an agreement based on self-determination which confers on Nagorno-Karabakh the highest degree of self-rule within Azerbaijan; 3) guaranteed security for Nagorno-Karabakh, and its population, including mutual obligations to ensure compliance by all the Parties with the provisions of the settlement.”⁵¹¹

Armenian delegations made a statement that annexed to the document, which reflected their approach to the solution of conflict by claiming that:

“The Armenian side is convinced that a solution of the problem can be found on the basis of international law and the principles laid down in the Helsinki Final Act, above all on the basis of the principle of self-determination.”⁵¹²

The Karabakh Armenians insisted to gain a larger role in the negotiation process, however, Baku rejected direct negotiation with Stepanakert (the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh) by claiming that this would provide legitimacy if direct talks were held with the *de facto* government, and moreover, Baku claimed that the Karabakh Azeris should also be

⁵⁰⁹ Natalie Sabanadze, “International Involvement in the South Caucasus”, *ECMI Working Paper*, No. 15, February 2002, p.9

⁵¹⁰ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.69

⁵¹¹ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Lisbon Summit, Lisbon Document, 1996 <http://www.osce.org/mc/39539?download=true>, accessed on 08.05.2012

⁵¹² Ibid.

presented on an equal basis, if the Karabakh Armenians were presented.⁵¹³ The proposal drawn by the OSCE Minsk Group for a loose federation between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan, as well as many regular talks which were held under the Minsk Group, did not produce any tangible solution for the settlement. While Baku insisted on a staged plan comprising first the liberation of the territories occupied by Armenia and the return of refugees; and then deciding the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, Yerevan insisted on a package plan.⁵¹⁴

These disagreements hampered the process for a positive outcome. The role of international mediators gained significant importance in conducting the process and in bringing parties into a common platform to reach a solution, at least to initiate. However, the OSCE's position, as the main international body working for a solution, and its effectiveness has been hampered by the internal differences and different priorities on their members' national policy agendas and also by the reluctance of some Western states to commit themselves to peacekeeping operations in the remote Caucasus region.⁵¹⁵

To sum up, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts have their own unique characteristics and different dynamics, however, all these post-Soviet ethno-territorial separatist movements have shared some similarities on the ground. First of all, they are all territorial conflicts which claim independence to enhance or to alter their autonomous status on the basis of ethnic discourse.⁵¹⁶ 1920 Soviet border delimitation, which has been seen as an example of "Moscow's divide and rule strategy", and the administrative arrangements of the constituent parts of the Soviet Union can be considered as an important factor for the grievance in all three conflict zones.⁵¹⁷

Second, all the conflicts have had a devastating effect on the economic and political developments of the concern states and worsened the economic disruption by cutting important trade links.⁵¹⁸ Therefore, one can argue that political disputes in the region have

⁵¹³ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.70

⁵¹⁴ Georgi Kamov, "EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas", Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, pp.64-65

⁵¹⁵ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, pp.68-69

⁵¹⁶ Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr, "The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe", Silk Road Paper Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, 2006, pp.27-28

⁵¹⁷ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.76

⁵¹⁸ Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr, "The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe", Silk Road Paper Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, 2006, pp.27-28

also hampered the economic developments of these newly independent states' immature economies and created a rigid obstacle on enhancing regional cooperation.

Third, in all cases, minorities have insisted on their rights for the preservation of their cultural identities and the continuation of their existence, and therefore, central governments have faced serious challenges coming from these minorities requests. Azerbaijanian and Georgian's security perceptions are primarily based on self-defense structure against external aggression, however, internal conflicts pose more dangerous threats to their national security than any external threats; and these internal threats to individual and national security provide more appropriate ground for the wider security concerns of the Caucasian states.⁵¹⁹

Another common point is the external political and military supports of external actors to the separatist movements which have primarily significant effects on the process.⁵²⁰ In all the three cases, the Russia presence in the region is the most crucial and significant element in shaping policy implications and strategies toward the three South Caucasus states and their intractable conflicts. These countries are historically bound with Russia, and can be considered as under its sphere of influence.

II.III. THE RUSSIAN INFLUENCE

The pre-dominant external security concerns after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the post-Soviet territories were initially Russia, and then, border disputes and minority rights. Soviet Union's vulnerable multi-ethnic structure clearly appeared right after the dissolution of the Union and powerful demands for independence or autonomy came immediately from the Union's constituent republics, prominently Baltic Republics, the Caucasus and Ukraine.⁵²¹ Whereas some of these newly emerging states severed their formal links with Russia, as three Baltic Republics, the majority of these states that can be labeled as Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) entered into a formal but loose relationship with

⁵¹⁹ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, pp.44-45

⁵²⁰ Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr, "The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe", Silk Road Paper Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, 2006, pp.27-28

⁵²¹ Michael Waller and Alexei Malashenko, "Conflicting Loyalties and the State in Post-Soviet Russia/Eurasia", in Michael Waller, Bruno Coppieters and Alexei Malashenko (eds.), *Conflicting Loyalties and the State in Post-Soviet Russia/Eurasia*, London: Frank Cass, 1998, pp.234-245

Russia due to some important economic and geopolitical realities in the region.⁵²² After 1989, the issue of self-determination became acute in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union territories. Throughout the ex-Soviet territories, different ethnic groups, such as in the Caucasus, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Georgians, Abkhazians and Chechens, all demanded independence on the basis of self-determination.⁵²³

Though Caucasian states became independent actors in international politics, the Russian effects over their policy implementations have not disappeared, only turned into less visible but strongly perceivable matter. Caucasian states remain weak compared to their neighbours and they have fears towards the potential threats coming from their neighbours, particularly from Russian intervention in their internal affairs, so they constantly seek to find allies against the threats coming from their small or large neighbours.⁵²⁴

Most ex-Soviet republics suffer from serious economic degradation, GDP drops with social problems, crime and disintegrative processes, thus several countries are weak, vulnerable or economically deprived enough to be easily penetrated by Russia as the historically big patronage in the region.⁵²⁵ Moreover, Russia needs to protect its presence in its former sphere of influence, since its “near abroad” is a crucial area for guaranteeing its domestic and global security and prestige as a respectable and powerful actor in the new Russian foreign policy and diplomacy.⁵²⁶

Russian bilateral relations with the regional countries and its decisive role in the developments and resolution processes of the conflicts are summarized, then in the following section, Russian influence within the framework of its sphere of influence, as well as its interests, are examined to evaluate the general picture in the region.

⁵²² Ibid., pp.234-245

⁵²³ Joseph S.Nye,Jr. *Understanding International Conflicts: An Introduction to Theory and History*, New York: Pearson, 2007,p.168

⁵²⁴ Svante E. Cornell, “Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in the Caucasus and Central Asia”, *Perception Journal of International Affairs* Vol.4 No.2, June-August 1999

⁵²⁵ Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp.403-406

⁵²⁶ Ibid., pp.403-414

II.III.I. GEORGIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

Georgian-Russian relations have always been in a problematic and contested framework. After the Soviet Union dissolved, Georgia refused to cooperate with Russia by declining to join the CIS and demanded the early withdrawal of Russian forces from its territories.⁵²⁷ Russian's reaction to these decisions was the cutting off the energy and other economic supplies to Georgia and sending peacekeeping forces to South Ossetia and then Abkhazia later.⁵²⁸

On security related issues, the national security concerns of both countries have generally collided. When Georgia refused to let Russian army pass through its territory to attack the Chechen rebels from the south, this refusal created dissatisfaction among the Russian policymakers since Russia had clear strategic interests to maintain its forces in Georgia due to the continuing Chechen conflict.⁵²⁹ Most Georgian politicians consider Russian military bases in Georgia as the Russian manipulation tools over their country. Moreover, the bases are located in the minority-populated areas, and the local population welcomes the Russian presence for economic reasons and regards Russia as their guarantee against a resurgence of a Georgian nationalism.⁵³⁰ Unlikely, Georgia is not very keen on continuing Russian presence in its territories. Furthermore, Tbilisi's decision of letting the Russian army pass through its territory could be considered as taking part in an operation; and this, in the long run, could inevitably force Georgia to involve into a wider Caucasian war as a side and open the country's territories as a target for terrorist attacks.⁵³¹

The belief that Russia gives military and political support to the secessionist entities has become clear among the Georgian politicians. The problematic relations between the two states turned into a war in 2008 over South Ossetia which resulted in the Russian's recognition of two separatist entities, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Since then, the bilateral relations between the two states have been frozen and Georgian search for international

⁵²⁷ William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire: Russia, Central Asia and Transcaucasus*, Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1995, pp.84-86

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.84-86

⁵²⁹ Revaz Gachechiladze, "Geopolitics in the South Caucasus: Local and External Players", *Geopolitics* Vol.7 No.1, 2002, p.131

⁵³⁰ Anna Matveeva, "South Caucasus: Nationalism, Conflict and Minorities", *Minority Rights Group International Report*, 2002, p.10

⁵³¹ Revaz Gachechiladze, "Geopolitics in the South Caucasus: Local and External Players", *Geopolitics* Vol.7 No.1, 2002, p.131

support to balance the Russian influence have become explicitly outspoken in many international fora.

II.III.I.I. SOUTH OSSETIA/ ABKHAZIA AND RUSSIA

Russian policy towards the two Georgian separatist regions has presented the most dominant controversial issue between the relations of two countries. Georgia's assertion on the Russians' continuing political and economic supports to the separatist entities has deteriorated the fragile relations. The Russian military response to the Georgian attempt to regain control over the South Ossetia in 2008 has deepened the problems between the two neighbouring countries.

Russia is mainly affected by South Ossetian conflict since the influx of refugees coming from the South Ossetia to the North aggravates the social tension within its borders.⁵³² Refugee flows in both conflicts have direct effects on Russian social, economic and demographic variables and increased lobbying activities to provide support towards separatist regions.

Russia does not favor the idea of South Ossetian unification with the North since the unified and strengthened Ossetia might potentially create another separatist inclination in the future and threaten Russian stability.⁵³³ However, on the other hand, Russia uses the South Ossetian, and also Abkhaz minorities as political tool in order to criticize or even intervene in Georgian internal affairs and creates a means of repression over Georgia. Georgian politicians have frequently accused the Russian policies for protecting and supporting these separatist activities within Georgian borders to undermine Georgian political stability and to gain leverage over them.

On the other hand, in the Russian parliament, there has been division on the policies towards these separatist regions, between the democrats or pro-Western group who insist on the principle of territorial integrity of Georgia and the nationalist opposition which dominates

⁵³² Ömer Kocaman, "Russian's Relations With Georgia Within The Context of The Russian National Interests Towards the South Caucasus in The Post-Soviet Era: 1992-2005", *USAK Yearbook* Vol.1 Year 2008, p.355

⁵³³ Ahmet Sapmaz, *Rusya'nın Transkaukasya Politikası ve Türkiye'ye Etkileri*, İstanbul: Ötüken, 2008, p.77

the parliament.⁵³⁴ The hardliner members of the Russian parliament clearly warn the Georgian government to comply with Russian demands otherwise Russia might need to take urgent measures to defend its citizens for their safety and survival.⁵³⁵

Russia considers South Ossetians as Russian citizens, as Abkhazians, and it implicitly refers them as a part of its citizens, hence legitimizes its actions towards them. For instance, whereas in 2002, Russia imposed visa against Georgia, it excluded the Abkhazians and South Ossetians and allowed the Abkhazians to receive Russian passports, this would provide Russia an acceptable ground to legitimize its argument of defending its own citizens.⁵³⁶

Unlike Abkhazia, South Ossetia has less capability and capacity to survive as an independent state without considerable Russian assistance and support.⁵³⁷ The North Ossetian government has also played crucial role in enhancing South Ossetians' fight toward Georgian authority by applying strong lobbying efforts in Moscow to intensify its actions towards Georgian government, besides they are actively confronting Georgian government by cutting of a pipeline carrying Russian natural gas to Georgia.⁵³⁸ The friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance treaties with Georgia's two breakaway entities, have clearly reflected the will of establishing close ties with Russia in order to help them to protect their borders and to give Moscow the right to deploy military bases on their territories.⁵³⁹ These external assistances, both military and political means, provide viable conditions to continue the confrontations without a political settlement. Russia would not accept a settlement for none of these conflicts as long as its interests would be accepted and guaranteed in the solution process.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁴ Ömer Kocaman, "Russian's Relations With Georgia Within The Context of The Russian National Interests Towards the South Caucasus in The Post-Soviet Era: 1992-2005", *USAK Yearbook* Vol.1 Year 2008, p.355

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.355-356

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.362

⁵³⁷ Nona Mikhelidze, "After the 2008 Russia-Georgia War: Implications for the Wider Caucasus and Prospects for Western Involvement in Conflict Resolution", Background Paper of the Conference on "The Caucasus and Black Sea Region: European Neighbourhood Policy and Beyond", Instituto Affari Internazionali, 6-7 February 2009, p.2

http://ancien.operationspaix.net/IMG/pdf/IAI_After2008RussiaGeorgiaWar_ImplicationsWiderCaucasus_ProspectsWesternInvolvement_ConflictResolution.pdf, accessed on 22.05.2012

⁵³⁸ Ömer Kocaman, "Russian's Relations With Georgia Within The Context of The Russian National Interests Towards the South Caucasus in The Post-Soviet Era: 1992-2005", *USAK Yearbook* Vol.1 Year 2008, p.356

⁵³⁹ Alexander Y. Skakov, "Russia's Role in the South Caucasus", *Helsinki Monitor* No.2, 2005, pp.120-126

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.120-126

Apart from Russian political and military supports Abkhaz also found significant assistance during the conflict from North Caucasian, in particular from Chechen fighters.⁵⁴¹ Abkhazians' stance differs from South Ossetian in searching for full independence and not claiming itself as a part of Russia. As most Abkhaz officials spoke out by denying any intention of joining Russia, however stressing on the close relation between them:

“To Russia, we propose not associated membership, but an associated relationship between two sovereign states; like the USA and the Marshall Islands. The Islands are part of the UN but have US bases on their soil. That’s what will happen eventually.”⁵⁴²

Russian political leverage over the South Caucasus countries and their ethnic minorities' and its outstanding position in mediating and negotiating process cannot be underestimated. In 2005, when Georgia declared their desire to withdrawal of CIS forces from Abkhazia, Russia counter reacted to this decision by using its leverage in the UN and stated that they could vote for the determination of the UNOMIG.⁵⁴³ Indeed, after the 2008 war, Russia vetoed the prolongation of UNOMIG forces in the region, after the Georgian declared its withdrawal from the CIS.⁵⁴⁴

Russian policy towards Georgian breakaway entities has been shaped within its national cost and benefit calculations. Russia cannot allow decreasing its involvement in the resolution process of the Abkhaz and South Ossetia conflicts since potential consequences of these conflicts could endanger its national security, and Russian withdrawal from these territories and the re-establishment of Georgian territorial integrity might entail an unfriendly country in the region.⁵⁴⁵ Hill & Jewett summarized the Russians approach as:

“A lasting peace in Shevardnadze’s Georgia was not in Russian interests. Russia needed to ensure its continued presence on the Georgian Black Sea. When Moscow’s economic blockade and its refusal to withdraw its troops failed to achieve these ends

⁵⁴¹ Ömer Kocaman, “Russian’s Relations With Georgia Within The Context of The Russian National Interests Towards the South Caucasus in The Post-Soviet Era: 1992-2005”, *USAK Yearbook* Vol.1 Year 2008, pp.357-362

⁵⁴² International Crisis Group, Abkhazia Today, Europe Today No.176, 15 September 2006, p.8
http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/176_abkhazia_today.ashx, accessed on 03.05.2012

⁵⁴³ Georgi Kamov, “EU’s Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas”, Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, p.60

⁵⁴⁴ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.67

⁵⁴⁵ Alexander Y. Skakov, “Russia’s Role in the South Caucasus”, *Helsinki Monitor* No.2, 2005, pp.120-126

(to enter the CIS and allow Russian bases in Georgia), Russia provided Abkhazia with enough firepower to turn to Moscow for assistance.”⁵⁴⁶

NATO countries express their concerns over the increased Russian military presence in the separatist regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and recommend Russia to reverse its recognition of their independence.⁵⁴⁷

“We reiterate our continued support to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders... We encourage all participants in the Geneva talks to play a constructive role as well as to continue working closely with the OSCE, the UN and the EU pursue peaceful conflict resolution in the internationally recognized territory of Georgia.”⁵⁴⁸

Georgia’s NATO membership still remains on partner status since NATO is cautious about taking a new member that might lead into a future conflict with Russia.⁵⁴⁹ Moscow is very keen on preventing Commonwealth States from joining NATO or hosting any new US military bases in its neighbourhood.⁵⁵⁰ The Georgian quest for NATO membership is a critical challenge for Russian security policy, therefore, Russia is not keen on allowing Georgia to host any US military base and will not diminish its military and political presence in the region. Russian deployment of missiles in Abkhazia also intensifies the concern of Georgians over the continuing Russian military presence in their territory.⁵⁵¹

II.III.II. AZERBAIJAN/ ARMENIA AND RUSSIA

Russia’s different approach to the South Caucasus states can be observed in many examples. Contrary to tense relations with Georgia, close relations with Armenia can be seen in the context of the “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Support” which includes a clause that stipulates the responsibility to support each other if one of them is attacked by a

⁵⁴⁶ Fiona Hill and Pamela Jewett, *Back in the USSR*, source n/a, cited in Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, pp.351-352

⁵⁴⁷ “NATO Concerned by Build-Up of Russian Military Presence in South Ossetia Abkhazia”, 21 May 2012 <http://www.interfax.com/newsinf.asp?id=333360>, accessed on 22.05.2012

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ “Russia Tensions Make NATO Wary of Georgia Bid”, BBC News Europe, 9 November 2011

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15652956>, accessed on 22.05.2012

⁵⁵⁰ Dimitri Trenin, “Russia’s Spheres of Interest, Not Influence”, *The Washington Quarterly* Vol.32 No.4, 2009, p.14

⁵⁵¹ “Russia Deploys Missiles in Breakaway Region of Abkhazia”, BBC News Europe, 11 August 2010 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-10940297>, accessed on 22.05.2012

third party.⁵⁵² On the other hand, a similar treaty signed with Azerbaijan does not include such phrase, instead only “urgent consultation” is placed.⁵⁵³

The geopolitical situation of Armenia differs principally from that of Azerbaijan and Georgia since its location is compressed between the two problematic neighbouring countries. During the Soviet era, particularly between 1991 and 1992, the Kremlin was relatively favoring Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) since it advocated status quo, whereas Armenia embodied the revisionist views and conducted independent policies.⁵⁵⁴ After the independence, Armenian leaders began to realize that the preservation of tension with Russia was not in the interests of Armenia, so afterwards they re-oriented their bilateral policies towards Russia in a more reconciliatory and cooperative manner to normalize their relations and enhance cooperation on political, economic and military fields.⁵⁵⁵

Today, Russia is considering Armenia as its main strategic partner in the former Soviet Union, and it sees itself as the crucial protector of Armenia and behaves in a very supportive manner to Armenia, especially in the military sphere.⁵⁵⁶ Similarly, Armenians consider Russia as their main protector and benefactor in the region, whereas public opinion in Georgia and Azerbaijan is completely different.⁵⁵⁷

II.III.II.I. NAGORNO-KARABAKH AND RUSSIA

Russian’ stance on NK issue is relatively more conciliatory and stable since there are of additional factors, other political actors, and its nature as being an inter-state ethnic confrontation among two sovereign states. Though the level of involvement in this conflict remains relatively limited, some Azerbaijani and Western sources insistently stated that there was a direct involvement of Russian troops in the NK war, such as the extensive arms supplies from Russia to Armenia.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵² Revaz Gachechiladze, “Geopolitics in the South Caucasus: Local and External Players”, *Geopolitics* Vol.7 No.1, 2002, pp.131-132

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.131-132

⁵⁵⁴ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.353

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.353

⁵⁵⁶ Revaz Gachechiladze, “Geopolitics in the South Caucasus: Local and External Players”, *Geopolitics* Vol.7 No.1, 2002, p.122

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.122

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.122

Negotiations in the NK conflict remain deadlock and the Azerbaijan's role in world politics is on the rise since its oil revenues increase. Azerbaijanian politicians start strongly to believe the idea of Azerbaijan has the capacity to build a strong army and it can impose a political or military solution on Armenia.⁵⁵⁹ On the other hand, Armenian side trusts its military superiority and its strong ties with Russia, and thinks that Azerbaijan can never gain sufficient military or political capability to regain the NK territorial authority.⁵⁶⁰

Moscow's supportive relations with Armenia are not arguable. However, Russian supports on the Armenian side remain in a low profile, and unlike in Abkhazia and South Ossetia where a direct Russian support is more tangible, Russia did not directly support the Armenian state; but supports the Armenian insurgents in NK.⁵⁶¹ On the other hand, Russia has not alienated Azerbaijanians in order to balance the regional dynamics and to avoid possible tensions in the region's politics. Russia has a chance to obtain guarantees against the future possibility of Azerbaijan's becoming a beachhead of American pressure on Iran which would not only threaten Russian stability, but also could destabilize the entire Caspian.⁵⁶²

Attempts to make a settlement by the OSCE to address the issue in the UN were turned down by Russia.⁵⁶³ Moreover, the US and France were also not very keen on bringing this issue into the UN due to the intensive Armenian Diaspora and energy interests in Azerbaijan.⁵⁶⁴ Due to this fragile balanced concern, the issue remains covered.

Russia has not so far posed any significant step to find a political solution on the settlement of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts, and has continued to maintain its military and peacekeeping presence that secures the status quo.⁵⁶⁵ Russia has preferred status quo mainly because they could not provide any sufficient resources to conclude the outcome that reflects its interests, and also if a political settlement is reached, Russia would have lost an important leverage over the South Caucasian states to prevent developing closer ties with the West.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁵⁹ Svante E. Cornell, "Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in the Caucasus and Central Asia", *Perception Journal of International Affairs* Vol.4 No.2, June-August 1999

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

⁵⁶² Alexander Y. Skakov, "Russia's Role in the South Caucasus", *Helsinki Monitor* No.2, 2005, pp.120-126

⁵⁶³ Georgi Kamov, "EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas", Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, p.65

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., p.65

⁵⁶⁵ Pavel K. Baev, "Russia's Policies in the Southern Caucasus and the Caspian Area", *European Security* Vol. 10 No.2, Summer 2001, pp.103

⁵⁶⁶ Dimitri Trenin, "Russia, the EU and the Common Neighbourhood", Centre for European Reform, September 2005

http://leader.viitorul.org/public/620/en/essay_russia_trenin_sept05.pdf, accessed on 20.05.2012

To sum up, Azerbaijan and Georgia gradually have to control and regulate their own national policies in a degree which enable them to pursue independent foreign policies rather aligning with the Russia.⁵⁶⁷ While Georgia and Azerbaijan follow more independent policies from Russia and seek alliance to eliminate Russian hegemony over their internal affairs⁵⁶⁸, Armenia pursues more pro-Russian policies and sees no other option but to ally with Russia for its security due to its geostrategic position.⁵⁶⁹ This converted orientation of the post-Soviet countries with the increased Western involvement in the region's economic and political incidents have enhanced dissatisfactions among the Russian policy makers. Enhancing openness in the region and strengthening interactions with the outside world, especially with Western countries, hinder Russian's interference in the internal matters of these states.⁵⁷⁰

II.III.III. THE RUSSIAN INTERESTS IN THE REGION

As a successor of the Soviet Union and as the region's most powerful neighbour, Russia plays an important role in the economic and political preferences of the region countries. As indicated in the Minority Rights Group International Report;

“Russia is a huge labour market for migrant workers from the Caucasus and the destination for most Caucasian goods, a source of energy supplies and investments, and represents the cultural and social heritage from many people who still get most of their news from Russian TV. It is also military power determined to protect its interests in the region.”⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁷ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.365

⁵⁶⁸ These attempts have been partly successful since Georgia was compelled to accept Russian troops on its territories to get Russian support on separatist minority issues and became a CIS member to restore stability (until 2008 Georgian-Russia war), Azerbaijan managed to avoid the return of Russian troops on its territory, but was forged to join the CIS as Georgia
Svante E. Cornell, “Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in the Caucasus and Central Asia”, *Perception Journal of International Affairs* Vol.4 No.2, June-August 1999

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.365

⁵⁷¹ Anna Matveeva, “South Caucasus: Nationalism, Conflict and Minorities”, *Minority Rights Group International Report*, 2002, p.10

After the dissolution, Russian leaders were not able to pose a clear and consistent strategy over their interests in the post-Soviet territories.⁵⁷² Although economic and political interests had been proclaimed constantly, no comprehensive assessments had been made and Russia remained unprepared to meet the new security challenges in its near abroad after the dissolution.⁵⁷³ Especially, Chechen Wars damaged Moscow's ability to influence developments in the Caucasus by converting its concentration on its domestic disorders rather external challenges.⁵⁷⁴

During 1992-1993, Russian politics had been dominated by the discussion about what constituted its national interests in the post-Soviet territories.⁵⁷⁵ Though after the dissolution Russian leaders had concentrated on their internal chaotic problems along with defining new identity and objectives in the international arena, the importance of its near abroad and the bilateral relations with the NIS had never been disregarded in Russian foreign policy. The majority of Russian politicians agreed in declaring that the near abroad as the focus of Russian new foreign policy and the then foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, even formally asked the UN to recognize Russia's special responsibility in the former Soviet Union in the name of keeping the region secure and prosperous.⁵⁷⁶

The unresolved conflicts in Azerbaijan and Georgia in the south have endangered the Russian security in the forms of organized crime, hostile foreign penetration and degradation of economic interests in the oil and gas resources of the Caspian basin.⁵⁷⁷ Unlike influences, interests are more specific and identifiable, and Russian interests in the region still remain whereas the increased Western presence in the region creates fears on the Russian side.⁵⁷⁸ The diversity of actors that are involved in policy towards the Caucasus inevitably complicates defining and prioritizing Russian's interest and security in the region.

Russian sphere of interests still remains with its crucial geographic, politic and economic importance, nevertheless, today it faces threats not only coming from ideological rivalry, but also coming from military and economic existence of the US and Western

⁵⁷² Pavel K. Baev, "Russia's Policies in the Southern Caucasus and the Caspian Area", *European Security* Vol. 10 No.2, Summer 2001, pp.95-110

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp.95-110

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.95-110

⁵⁷⁵ Dimitri Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, Not Influence", *The Washington Quarterly* Vol.32 No.4, 2009, p.8

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8

⁵⁷⁷ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.105

⁵⁷⁸ Dimitri Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, Not Influence", *The Washington Quarterly* Vol.32 No.4, 2009, pp.3-22

countries.⁵⁷⁹ Furthermore, its sphere of influence has been getting smaller since the increase of Western presence within its near abroad and colliding interests with the US or the EU countries led the Russian policy makers to consider new approaches to its immediate neighbours in order to protect their interests.⁵⁸⁰

The penetration of the Caspian region by the Western oil companies, official US support for multiple pipelines from the region and NATO's enlargement including post-Soviet territories alert the Russian politicians to protect their national security and interests in the region.⁵⁸¹ However, Russia would not tolerate any external involvement into its historical sphere of influence. Increased Western and Turkish influence in the region pose crucial concerns over the Russian's vital interests in the region.⁵⁸² The former imperial borders of the Russia, present both its power center advancing its security and influence, and a cushion to protect Russia from the undesirable encroachments of other great powers.⁵⁸³ Russia would secure its position in the development and the transportation of oil and gas, especially Azerbaijan's offshore oil, and to prevent any other external power to enhance its strategic position in its near abroad.⁵⁸⁴

Russia has been, and still is, the most crucial player in shaping South Caucasus political developments. Mainly its geographical proximity as well as its military, political and economic presence have enabled Moscow to exert influence over the region's countries' internal developments, especially in the conflicts and their ceasefire negotiations.⁵⁸⁵ Andrei Kozyrev, then foreign minister of Russia, stated: "any plan to create a sphere of influence for anybody by means of easing Russia out of the post-Soviet space is both hopeless and dangerous."⁵⁸⁶

The core of the Russian strategy is concentrated on the economic interests in the region and Moscow prefers to approach its actions in the region within geo-economic terms

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., pp.3-22

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.3-22

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., pp.3-22

⁵⁸² Revaz Gachechiladze, "Geopolitics in the South Caucasus: Local and External Players", *Geopolitics* Vol.7 No.1, 2002, pp.128-129

⁵⁸³ Dimitri Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, Not Influence", *The Washington Quarterly* Vol.32 No.4, 2009, pp.3-22

⁵⁸⁴ Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.422

⁵⁸⁵ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, pp.102-103

⁵⁸⁶ Andrei Kozyrev, "S mechom mirotvortsa" *Moskovskie novosti*, No.36, pp.4-11, September 1994, cited in Dimitri Trenin, "Russia and Western Interests in Preventing, Managing and Settling Conflicts in the Former Soviet Union", in Bruno Coppieters, Alexei Zverev and Dimitri Trenin (eds.) *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, London: Frank Cass, 1998, p.187

rather than in geopolitical terms.⁵⁸⁷ However, increased Western influence through color revolutions in the former Soviet territories brings not only Western values and concepts in the region but also brings the struggle among former enemies for sphere of influence where the Russians' vital sphere of interests still exists. Therefore, the Russian politicians feel the necessity to contain their immediate neighbourhood and form more concrete measures to prevent the rise of political and economic Western presence in the region. Russians' suspicion towards any NATO penetration into the Southern Caucasus has crucially affected its policy towards the three South Caucasus countries, as in the Georgian case. Although the Russian military existence in the newly independent states decede with the Russian troops' withdrawal from bases, Russia would not be pleased if the security vacuum is filled by Western military forces.⁵⁸⁸

Apart from the increased presence of external players in the region, Russia has also concerned with the formation of different alliances in the region, which have been created a new group of common interests within the CIS.⁵⁸⁹ CIS presents a crucial political tool for Russians' regional and global standing that shows Russia as the bloc leader who has a right to speak on behalf of this larger area.⁵⁹⁰ Therefore, Russia has also control and consolidated its power and presence through strengthening the CIS.⁵⁹¹ For that reason, the withdrawal of a member from this bloc or any possible alliances out of the Russian control weakens the Russian image, and this situation threatens Russian hegemony in the region's politics. In that respect, the GUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova) under CIS, which was established on the basis of shared economic interests and similar secessionist provinces, creates another platform to its members to solve their problems.⁵⁹² Therefore, this might be perceived as a threat to the Russian hegemony in the organization because it can divide CIS into two camps.⁵⁹³ However, any solution that disregards Russia would be feasible and realistic. Being both a crucial regional power and an international actor, Russia has many

⁵⁸⁷ Pavel K. Baev, "Russia's Policies in the Southern Caucasus and the Caspian Area", *European Security* Vol. 10 No.2, Summer 2001, pp.95-110

⁵⁸⁸ Dimitri Trenin, "Russia, the EU and the Common Neighbourhood", Centre for European Reform, September 2005

http://leader.viitorul.org/public/620/en/essay_russia_trenin_sept05.pdf, accessed on 20.05.2012

⁵⁸⁹ Revaz Gachechiladze, "Geopolitics in the South Caucasus: Local and External Players", *Geopolitics* Vol.7 No.1, 2002, p.129

⁵⁹⁰ Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.412

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.422

⁵⁹² Revaz Gachechiladze, "Geopolitics in the South Caucasus: Local and External Players", *Geopolitics* Vol.7 No.1, 2002, p.129

⁵⁹³ Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.412

political and economic interests in the region therefore it will not easily accept any external actors' influence. Therefore, the GUAM countries try to keep their cooperation in a low profile that would not to jeopardize their relations with Russia.⁵⁹⁴

The policy preferences of regional actors towards the regional developments can be considered as important variables, which determine the Russian activities in the region. Russia introduced new structures to enhance its stance on bilateral and regional cooperation, such as CIS Collective Security Treaty (CSTO), to procure diplomatic solidarity, though it is not a quite effective mechanism; or Euro-Asian Economic Community (EuroAsEC), for regional economic cooperation.⁵⁹⁵ However, Georgia and Azerbaijan are not included in these two structures since they have controversial relations with Russia due to Russian assistance towards the separatist minorities in their territories.

Russia is determined to keep the Caucasus in its sphere of influence and, rather any Western military presence in the name of peacekeeping forces, it wants to keep on negotiating for the deployment of Russian or CIS forces in the region. When Russia became a permanent co-chair of the Minsk Group, it intensified its leverage on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in a way and it succeeded to make the Russian initiatives taken into consideration under the OSCE.⁵⁹⁶ Azerbaijan remains suspicious on the Russian's active diplomacy over the NK issue and doubts on the long-term Russian objectives in the Caucasus, and thus, rejects proposals for an exclusively Russian or CIS peacekeeping.⁵⁹⁷ Apart from Azerbaijan, Georgia is considerably assertive about its decision not to participate in the CIS mutual security treaty and behaves increasingly independent from Moscow.⁵⁹⁸

Russia clearly emphasizes its vital interest in the region and demonstrates its readiness to embark on military confrontation in order to achieve its goals, and if necessary by exerting aggressive policies towards the former Soviet countries to restore its primacy over them.⁵⁹⁹ The 2008 Georgian-Russia war posed serious challenges not only for Georgia, but also for the

⁵⁹⁴ Svante E. Cornell, "Geopolitics and Strategic Alignments in the Caucasus and Central Asia", *Perception Journal of International Affairs* Vol.4 No.2, June-August 1999

⁵⁹⁵ Dimitri Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, Not Influence", *The Washington Quarterly* Vol.32 No.4, 2009, pp.3-22

⁵⁹⁶ Edmund Herzing, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p.69

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., p.69

⁵⁹⁸ Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*, UK: Curzon Press, 2001, p.365

⁵⁹⁹ Nona Mikhelidze, "After the 2008 Russia-Georgia War: Implications for the Wider Caucasus and Prospects for Western Involvement in Conflict Resolution", Background Paper of the Conference on "The Caucasus and Black Sea Region: European Neighbourhood Policy and Beyond", Istituto Affari Internazionali, 6-7 February 2009, p.2

http://ancien.operationspaix.net/IMG/pdf/IAI_After2008RussiaGeorgiaWar_ImplicationsWiderCaucasus_ProspectsWesternInvolvement_ConflictResolution.pdf, accessed on 22.05.2012

wider Caucasus and beyond, urged all the actors in the region to redefine their strategies towards the region and its relations with Russia by raising the urgency to engage in conflict resolution and the need for energy diversifications.⁶⁰⁰ However in order to achieve any sustainable political solutions for Caucasian conflicts, none of the efforts should underestimate or exclude the Russian factor and its interests in the region.

Concluding Remarks

As conclusion, we can say that there is a growing awareness on the EU side towards the importance of the South Caucasus region and consequently towards its conflicts. The developments in the EU's foreign policy mechanisms and institutions have similarly gained impetus in defining the EU's role as an international security actor in the new world order. Internal and external dynamics, in a way, obliged the EU to take greater responsibility on the global concerns which have also implicitly or explicitly affected the Union's security and prosperity. As one of the consequences of EU's last enlargement, the superficially mentioned issues, such as the instability and conflicts in the South Caucasian region, become to be addressed more directly in the EU foreign policy making structure. This increased awareness of the regional developments can be observed in many EU's documents and policies regarding the resolution of the region's conflicts.

As we analyzed in detailed the South Caucasus region has presented a crucial area both in the economic and security terms for the Union's future. This strategic region does not only matter for the Union, but also for the US and Russia, along with other regional actors, Turkey or Iran. All these actors share strategic interests over the region countries in terms of transportation, energy resources and security. In this context, the increased EU's position in the region would both strength the international perception of the EU's actorness, as well as the EU's own security and prosperity for its future developments.

However, the South Caucasus region is a challenging task for the EU due to the existence of the deep rooted historical ethnic conflicts along with the historical leader of the region, Russia, and its interests in this region. The development of the three intractable conflicts and the complicated relations between the regional actors and their relations with Russia hinder the EU's involvement in this area. Russia can be regarded as the most essential

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

actor in the region, and its policies towards the region countries have substantially affected the regional developments, as in the Georgian case in 2008. Therefore, the EU has to consider and articulate its strategy and policies towards the region regarding these factors and has to act strategically in order to strength its profile as an international security actor.

CHAPTER III. THE EU'S CONFLICT RESOLUTION EFFORTS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Under this chapter, the scope and the development of the EU's involvement in the South Caucasus region and its three intractable conflicts are further evaluated along with the mechanisms, instruments and policy initiatives that have enhanced the EU's involvement. The additional values that the EU can provide for the ongoing processes and the alternative initiatives that can be implemented in the search for peace in the region are discussed to analyze the EU's contributions and efforts in the peace negotiations. Furthermore, the EU's capabilities and coordination with other mechanisms involved in the current negotiations are touched upon in order to illustrate the EU's position and its level of involvement in the conflict resolution processes.

III.I. THE EU'S POLICY TOWARDS THE SOUTH CAUCASUS CONFLICTS

The EU's involvement in the region's conflicts is a challenging task and also a necessity, because the EU should design a coherent strategy in a very complicated region both for its own security and for its image as an international actor. The lack of precise strategy in the EU politics related to the South Caucasus affairs has created dilemmas in the EU's foreign policy. According to Bruno Coppieters, "the perception of the South Caucasus as a conglomerate of weak and failing states, authoritarian regimes, poor and corrupt economies and unresolved border and secessionist conflicts make it additionally difficult for the EU to design a coherent strategy".⁶⁰¹

On the other hand, as indicated in the previous chapter, the EU has become more aware of its growing security and economic interests in the region. However, they are not acting very keen on further and direct engagement with the region's politics since the long-standing conflict in the region and the existence of the powerful regional and global actors in the region's affairs pose serious setbacks for the EU. The EU should clarify its strategy

⁶⁰¹ Bruno Coppieters, *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies From the Periphery*, Academia Press, 2004, p.216

towards the South Caucasus region and its conflicts for the sake of its own future and its strength as an international actor and should overcome these obstacles with pragmatic and reasonable strategies without jeopardizing its bilateral relations with other actors in the region. However, as Nicu Popescu argues, the EU's involvement in conflict resolution is "externally driven", thus, the EU actions are determined by "external constraints or opportunities rather than by strategic design".⁶⁰²

The EU is relatively new and fresh actor in the South Caucasus conflicts. New approaches and initiatives ruled by a robust external actor might be helpful to eliminate the deadlock in the negotiations. At that point, the EU can offer a new phase in the negotiation process with its extensive civilian tools and mechanisms which might bring a different perspective in the discussion for both sides. The EU's Special Representative for the South Caucasus, EU delegations in Tbilisi, Baku and Yerevan, and the other official staff in these countries have been assigned to facilitate and enhance confidence building among conflicting parties. All these EU actors in the region contacting with local actors, ranging from EUSR, EU delegations in capital (Baku, Yerevan, Tbilisi) to the border monitoring support staff in Georgia, have shared the responsibility to conduct mediating activities between conflicting views. This also enhances the EU's presence in the region and strengthen its bilateral relations with the South Caucasus countries and the local population.

As Hassner claims territorial disputes become more entrenched and complicated within time.⁶⁰³ "Time" might deteriorate the situation since "entrenched disputes become increasingly resistant to resolution enhancing reluctance to offer, accept or implement compromises even negotiate over disputed territories."⁶⁰⁴ The more suffered people wait for a settlement, the more their hopes of reaching it by using peaceful mechanisms become unfeasible. The deadlocks in the process, in a sense, cause them to lose their faith in the success of the peace negotiations and pave the way the possibility of incite violent actions towards opposing groups. These conflicts have been also damaging the countries' economic and political developments by diverting and lessening the effects of provided assistance and financial aids to achieve desired outcomes in the reform process.⁶⁰⁵ Therefore, the EU's contributions are crucial for building trust and enhance cooperation between conflicting

⁶⁰² Nicu Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, pp.457-477

⁶⁰³ Ron E. Hassner, "The Path to Intractability Time and Entrenchment of Territorial Disputes", *International Security*, Vol.31 No.3, Winter 2006/2007, pp.107-138

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.109

⁶⁰⁵ Dov Lynch, "Why Georgia Matters?", *Chaillot Paper* No.86, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, February 2006, pp.59-60

views. As Emma Stewart referred in analyzing the conflicts in the South Caucasus, “at the elite level, there is a severe lack of trust between the parties, leading to increasing belligerence and militaristic language.”⁶⁰⁶ Therefore, the EU should provide a middle-way approach by enhancing trust and parity between conflicting views in order to cease the tension among conflicting groups.

The EU’s activities in the region, as a third party intervener, can be classified under some fundamental forms which can contribute to the long term goal of conflict transformation. Mediation efforts which include a wide range of activities “facilitating communication, creating parity, suggesting options and providing resources”⁶⁰⁷ and also most importantly confidence building activities which is particularly crucial in the case of ethnic conflicts present the EU’s efforts between conflicting parties.⁶⁰⁸ The EU’s contributions pave the way for building trust and enhance cooperation between the conflicting sides.

The EU, indeed, has little experiences in the conflict resolution field and South Caucasus is highly complex and unstable region for EU to exert its foreign policy instrument with efficient way where political struggle and instability prevail. As specified in the previous chapter, the EU had little inclination or intention to become involved in the region’s long-standing conflicts until its larger enlargement brought the Union closer to the region and necessitated an alternative way to handle the instability in its neighbourhood. Therefore, the EU is a relatively new actor both in conflict resolution and in the South Caucasus region's politics.

The level of EU engagement to the South Caucasus conflicts is criticized by being insufficient compared to the high-level declaratory commitments of a stronger and active role in their resolutions.⁶⁰⁹ The EU’s actions in the region would not satisfy the responsibilities arising from the growing needs of taking more concrete actions in the prevention and resolution of the region’s conflicts. This moderate approach and the lack of consistency in the

⁶⁰⁶ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.10

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁶⁰⁷William R. Ayres, “Mediating International Conflicts: Is Image Change Necessary?”, *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 34 No.4, pp.431-447, cited in Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.4

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁶⁰⁸ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.4

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁶⁰⁹ Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, pp.457-477

EU's policy implementation fortify the view that, as Nicu Popescu emphasizes, "the post-Soviet secessionist conflicts are close enough for the EU to make an interested actor, but far enough for them to become an EU priority."⁶¹⁰ While Popescu analyses the level of the EU's involvement in the South Caucasus conflicts, he mainly argues the EU's decision not to intervene by placing its actions under various degrees of reluctant involvement.⁶¹¹ This view reflects the current interpretation of the EU's weight and effectiveness over the peace processes. However, in reality, the EU needs to change this perception both for its future stability and security in the wider context, as well as for its new role as a robust global actor in world affairs.

Since there is no generally accepted agreement on drawing concrete lines or clear-cut delineations about what exactly conflict resolution/prevention/management entails, all the EU's contribution to the peace process and the activities initiated or included in the search for a settlement to the South Caucasus conflicts are scrutinized under this chapter. "Can the EU provide any added value to the current situation?", "Does the EU have the capabilities or the incentives to bring opposing parties under a common approach to find a political settlement of the conflicts?" are asked in order to evaluate the EU's stance in the resolution processes. After a short summary, the EU's involvement in the regional conflicts in the framework of bilateral relations, through mainly ENP Action Plans and EUSR's activities in the region, are addressed in the first section of this chapter. Then, the EU's relations with other international organizations that are engaged in the peace process in the region are analyzed within the framework of their contributions as well as their deficiencies. Under such circumstances, what role the EU can assume will be discussed. In the last part, the EU's capabilities and tools are assessed in terms of satisfying the expectations of the South Caucasus states as well as the EU's own expectations from the initiatives taken in the region.

III.I.I. PROCESS OF THE EU ENGAGEMENT IN THE REGION

As indicated in the previous chapter, the EU did not show similar enthusiasm to the South Caucasus region as much as it showed to the CEECs. Instead, it followed a limited and distant approach to the region at the beginning. There are several reasons why the EU has

⁶¹⁰ Nicu Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.458

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.457-477

applied a limited and gradual approach towards the South Caucasus. Among them, Russia presents the most crucial factor which limits the EU's actions in the region. Member States' national interests and the divisions among themselves about their stance towards Russia are the other important impediments that the EU has faced in its internal structure. Furthermore, the South Caucasus region has been already highly complicated region that presents a tough task for the EU as elaborated in the previous chapter. Member States had even debated whether a PCA that was signed with these countries would have worsened and complicated problems.⁶¹² They had been discussing the level of their relations with these newly independent post-Soviet Republics and had some hesitations revolving around the question of "how realistic is it to expect full implementation of the relatively high levels of obligations inherit to a PCA' by countries that were facing the difficulties which confront the South Caucasus."⁶¹³ Nevertheless, the EU also admitted that they were aware of the fact that the region was dominated by the conflicts in NK and in Georgia (namely Abkhazia), and the dependency on economic and humanitarian assistance would likely to continue, therefore, the EU intended to increase its profile in the region by providing them economic and humanitarian support for the survival of the population and reconstruction of war-torn societies.⁶¹⁴ Indeed, as Commission indicates, "the EU has, inter alia, its geopolitical and economic interests in the region as well as a moral interest in participating humanitarian activity in a part of the world which is a bridge between Europe and Asia".⁶¹⁵

The EU has gradually enhanced its presence in this post-Soviet region, particularly with regard to conflict resolution.⁶¹⁶ The PCAs have provided the contractual basis which establish the bilateral relations between three South Caucasus states and the EU. They mainly regulate and frame the scope and the content of the EU's strategy towards the region and to their conflicts in a way by assisting them in the resolution.

"While there is no clear definition, on the part of the EU, of what conflict resolution is to mean in terms of the concrete policies that the Union is to formulate and implement, a minimum consensus exists among the Commission and Council officials that it

⁶¹² Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.69

⁶¹³ European Commission, *Toward a European Union Strategy for Relations with the Transcaucasian Republics*, Communication from Commission, Brussels, 31.05.1995

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁶ For further information see "Table 6.1 EU involvement in post-Soviet secessionist conflicts" in Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.119

involves assisting the parties to a conflict to achieve agreement on a mutually acceptable institutional framework within which they can deal with disputes by political means rather than through recourse to violence.”⁶¹⁷

As the EU awareness on the importance of the region has increased, the number of policies in the region has also gradually increased. First, the EU signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with each republic in 1996 which went into force in 1999. In February 2001 the General Affairs and External Relations Council declared that the EU was willing to play a more active political role in the South Caucasus, stating that it would seek ways of lending its support ‘to prevent and resolve conflicts’ and assist in post-conflict rehabilitation.⁶¹⁸ Therefore, the EU boosted its cooperation with the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), UN (United Nations) and Council of Europe, to reinforce bilateral and multilateral dialogue with the South Caucasus states and its conflicts.⁶¹⁹ Afterwards, in the European Security Strategy (ESS), the EU has explicitly showed its keen interest in this strategically important area by defining the region as an area in which it would be taking a ‘stronger and more active interest’.⁶²⁰ The EU has deepened its engagement with the three countries of the South Caucasus by appointing a Union’s Special Representative (EUSR) for the region in 2003.⁶²¹ In 2004, the European Parliament’s Gahrton Report has also recognized the growing importance of this region by stating that “if it’s left out of the evolving network of cooperation, the danger export of instability from neighbouring regions would increase.”⁶²² In the same year, the three South Caucasian States, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, were included in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) via Commission proposal to Council.

In December 2005 Javier Solana, the EU’s High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, affirmed that the organization was ready to play a greater role in efforts to resolve the long-running conflicts of the South Caucasus.⁶²³ In November 2006, Action Plans with three South Caucasus states were signed and mutual commitments and joint

⁶¹⁷ Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff, “The EU as a Conflict Manager? The Case of Georgia and Its Implications”, *International Affairs* Vol.86 No.1, 2010, p.2

⁶¹⁸ Tracey C. German, “Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus”, *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.358

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.358

⁶²⁰ Commission, A Secure Europe in a Better World European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003

⁶²¹ Council Joint Action 2003/496/CFSP of 7 July 2003 Concerning the Appointment of an EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus

⁶²² Tracey C. German, “Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus”, *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.359

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, p.358

priorities were set in those plans which would provide a theoretical framework for the development of relations and the EU's engagement in the conflict resolution process. The incremental involvement of the EU in the region's politics has gained strength with the bilateral dialogues and revisions of the Country Plans in the framework of the ENP. Additionally, in 2009, Eastern Partnership (EaP) was launched as a specific Eastern dimension in the ENP, covering Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, which aimed to further and deeper engagement and gradual integration with these countries, both on political and economic spheres.⁶²⁴ All these evolving and developing relations have strengthened the EU's stance in the region's economic developments and future stability.

III.I.I.I. THE EUROPEAN UNION SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

The EU Special Representative (EUSR) can be regarded as “the EU's key player in mediation”⁶²⁵ and the appointment of the EUSR for the South Caucasus presents an important dimension of the EU's gradual involvement in the region's conflicts. This was, actually, a necessity for the EU which intends to play greater role in the region's politics as clearly stated in the Council's Joint Action on 7 July 2003:

“The Council has stated its willingness to play a more active political role in the South Caucasus. There is a need to ensure clear lines of responsibility, as well as the coordination and consistency of external actions of the European Union in the South Caucasus... to enhance EU effectiveness and visibility in the region.”⁶²⁶

The EUSR, then appointed Heikke Talvitie, was tasked for the implementation of the EU's objectives, to assist Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia in carrying out political and

⁶²⁴ European Union External Action, “Eastern Partnership”

http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/index_en.htm, accessed on 05.07.2012

⁶²⁵ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.10

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁶²⁶ Council Joint Action 2003/496/CFSP of 7 July 2003 Concerning the Appointment of an EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus

economic reforms, to encourage further regional cooperation and to assist conflict resolution processes with defined and outlined mandates in the Joint Action:

- “(a) develop contacts with governments in the region
- (b) encourage Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan to cooperate on regional themes of common interests
- (c) contribute to the prevention of conflicts through recommendations for action related to civil society and rehabilitation of territories (including promoting the return of refugees and internally displaced persons)
- (d) assist in conflict resolution in particular to enable the EU better to support the UN Secretary General and his Special Representative for Georgia, the Group of Friends of the UN Secretary General for Georgia, the OSCE Minsk Group and the conflict resolution mechanism for South Ossetia under the aegis of the OSCE
- (e) intensify EU dialogue with the main interested actors
- (f) assist the Council in further developing a comprehensive policy towards the South Caucasus.”⁶²⁷

The first EUSR was appointed with “a rather weak mandate” and faced with budgetary constraints.⁶²⁸ Furthermore, the coordination problem between the Council and the Commission additionally restrained the EUSR’s activities and its efficiency in the region’s affairs. Inconsistency between these two EU institutions on conflict resolution efforts created two-headed policies which will indeed result with coordination problems.⁶²⁹

The lack of “speaking in a common voice” has diminished the EU’s effectiveness on taking action and describing a precise policy towards the region conflicts.⁶³⁰ Furthermore, constantly rotating presidencies have brought further complications and incompetence in the EU’s policies.⁶³¹ Hence, the appointment of the EUSR was intended to diminish this lack of coherence by providing at least a minimal contiguity between the fluctuating agendas of the various presidencies.⁶³²

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.74

⁶²⁹ Nicu Popescu, “Europe’s Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document No.260*, March 2007, p.16

⁶³⁰ Bruno Coppieters, *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies From the Periphery*, Academia Press, 2004, pp.216-217

⁶³¹ Ibid., pp.216-217

⁶³² Ibid., p.217

As indicated in the Joint Action, in order to provide consistency and continuity, the EUSR would be in charge of regular reporting to the Commission, Council and High Representative; and would also be in liaison with other international actors in the field, in particular the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.⁶³³ However, this has not provided a desirable outcome since the EUSR has faced some limitations and has not been directly engaged in the mediation efforts. The EUSR is appointed by the Council and has the mandate to work on conflict resolution, however, the Commission (through its delegations in Georgia) participates in the Joint Control Commission (JCC) meetings and implements projects on the ground.⁶³⁴ This, as Popescu defends, “diminishes the potential impact of EU actions and poses problems of coordination and lack of political visibility for the EU in the conflict resolution framework, despite significant financial commitment”.⁶³⁵

The EU’s decisions led to gradually further involvement in the South Caucasus region and its conflict, nevertheless this has not been in the form of a consistent and pre-determined policy choice. At the beginning, South Caucasus states were excluded from the Wider Europe initiative since they were regarded as unstable and weak counties to perform such high level of commitments.⁶³⁶ However, the same reason was considered as the reason for increasing the EU’s involvement in the region, because “the EU cannot afford the disintegration of states in its vicinity of its new borders”.⁶³⁷ As Bruno Coppieters argues:

“There was, thus, a contradiction between the EU’s policies that have to respond to the challenge of states unable to reform themselves on the one hand, and the EU policies that are responding to the challenge of weak and failing states threatening European stability, on the other.”⁶³⁸

Popescu argues that the appointment of the EUSR is another example of the EU’s reactive and “substitute policy” which aims to compensate the exclusion of the South Caucasus countries from the ENP, even though the 2003 ESS stated the importance and the

⁶³³ Council Joint Action 2003/496/CFSP of 7 July 2003 Concerning the Appointment of an EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus

⁶³⁴ Nicu Popescu, “Europe’s Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.16

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16

⁶³⁶ Bruno Coppieters, *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies From the Periphery*, Academia Press, 2004, pp.222-223

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.222-223

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.223

necessity of assuming greater responsibility towards the problems of the South Caucasus region.⁶³⁹

“The EUSR South Caucasus was appointed, not because there was a strong EU consensus on the need for a pro-active EU involvement in the South Caucasus, but rather to compensate the countries of the region for the exclusion (at that stage) from the ENP.”⁶⁴⁰

These two initiatives of EU’s instruments of its foreign policy, the ENP and the EUSR for the South Caucasus, have contained contradictions and have a potential for further complications in designing a coherent strategy towards the South Caucasus and its conflicts. As Coppieters argues that the Council appointed EUSR and Commission initiated ENP can cause the lack of coordination since two institutions have different priorities and foreign policy tasks and instruments, therefore, this contradiction should be resolved by a strategy that eliminates all possible threatening consequences which can damage the EU’s future stability and security.⁶⁴¹

“The Russia-first approach” also restrains the EUSR’s activities in the region and in strengthening its position vis-à-vis Member States.⁶⁴² For the same reason, its room for maneuver and institutional autonomy is more limited since Russian domination in the Georgian conflicts has been more tangible rather than any other conflicts in the post-Soviet territories.⁶⁴³ Russia has more involved in Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts since its geographical proximity has facilitated its direct involvement.⁶⁴⁴ Moreover, the probabilities of violence in these secessionist regions have been higher and the problematic relations between Russia and Georgia which have serious political implications in the wider region, became much more tense because of the Georgian’s search for NATO membership.⁶⁴⁵

In 2006, the EUSR’s mission was expanded with the inclusion of a mandate “to contribute to the settlement of conflicts and facilitate the implementation of such settlement with UN and OSCE’s conflict resolution mechanisms”⁶⁴⁶ rather than just assisting their

⁶³⁹ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.71-74

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.73

⁶⁴¹ Bruno Coppieters, *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies From the Periphery*, Academia Press, 2004, p.223

⁶⁴² Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.74

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.74

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.74

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.74

⁶⁴⁶ Council Joint Action 2006/121/CFSP of 20 February 2006 Appointing the European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus

resolution processes. This can be regarded as a clear and important reflection for further and more pro-active EU's involvement in the region's conflict as an independent actor. However, the existing constraints have still diminished the effectiveness of the EUSR's policies and made the EUSR's involvement in the resolution of the conflicts remain low.

Increased complexity in Georgia, mainly after the 2008 war, paved way for the EU to assign a separate EUSR for conflicts in Georgia to monitor the EU-initiated ceasefire agreement.⁶⁴⁷ However, this did not produce any tangible positive outcomes or contribute to the existing problems of the EUSR has faced in the region. The EUSR is still facing some limitations in terms of enhancing its scope of actions and its competences in the region's conflicts, thereby, its efforts remain inadequate to fulfill the expectations.

III.I.I.II. THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

In order to achieve stable democratic development within a country through promoting democratic values and encouraging reforms, the EU targets the ENP as a key foreign policy instrument to "contribute to a more positive climate for conflict settlement".⁶⁴⁸ Since it is a Commission-driven policy, the ENP framework has mostly focused on conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation rather than direct and clear EU participation in the resolution process.⁶⁴⁹ This has also reduced the EU's weight in the negotiation process and minimizes the ENP's strength in conflict resolution-related issues. As Sasse claims:

"The ENP was not designed to address the management or resolution of the unresolved conflicts in the former Soviet Union. It remains politically, institutionally and financially under-equipped to do so and it faces obvious external constraints, such as Russia in the region."⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁷ Council Joint Action 2008/760/CFSP of 25 September 2008 Appointing the European Union Special Representative for the Crisis in Georgia.

⁶⁴⁸ Benita Ferrero-Waldner, "The European Neighbourhood Policy: The EU's Newest Foreign Policy Instrument", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11/2, 2006, cited in Tracey C. German, "Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus", *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.360

⁶⁴⁹ Nicu Popescu, "EU in Moldova Setting Conflict in the Neighbourhood", *Occasional Paper* No.60, Institute for Security Studies, 2005, cited in Georgi Kamov, "EU's Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas, Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales", 2006, p.51

⁶⁵⁰ Gwendolyn Sasse, "The European Neighbourhood Policy and Conflict Management: A Comparison of Moldova and the Caucasus" *Ethnopolitics*, 2009, pp.369-372

Nevertheless, although conflict resolution is not directly mentioned in the ENP Action Plans, the importance of settling the disputes in the process of deepening bilateral relations are underlined in each plan. Their focus is more towards economic and political transformation rather searching for a settlement of the conflict.

On the other hand, although the EU regulates its bilateral relations through the ENP APs and addresses resolution of the conflicts in the region by promoting European norms and values with long-term reforms, the lack of membership prospect at the end is generally criticized by being the main challenge for the success and efficiency of the policy, as well as the EU's conflict resolution efforts. As Tracey German affirms:

“One of the major drawbacks of the ENP is that, while it is based on the same positive conditionality that underpins enlargement and rewards progress in reforms with inducement such as an even deeper relationship with the EU, the greatest potential incentive, membership, is not an offer. This means that the organization has much less influence, not just in terms of relationship with ENP countries, but also in terms of conflict resolution.”⁶⁵¹

The lack of such an ultimate status -even though some sort of conditionality was applied to the ENP countries for deepening relations with the Union- along with the ambiguity in the process are generally considered as unsatisfactory for the ENP countries and might discourage their convictions to the requirements of the policy. As Bruno Coppieters argues that membership process might be a useful initiative to transform the parties' conflict behaviors.⁶⁵² The ENP reflects the EU's role as a framework by contributing indirectly to conflict prevention and stabilization with the promotion of democratic norms and values. However, without membership prospect, the impact and the effectiveness of this policy initiative is highly open to discussion because it lacks enough incentive for the parties to transform their attitude in searching a settlement of the disputes.

Emma Stewart argues that the EU has also lost an opportunity on achieving to put a conditional setting in the ENP APs to contribute to the conflict resolution in South Caucasian countries and overlooked a possible leverage over the concerned countries' implementation of

⁶⁵¹ Tracey C. German, “Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus”, *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.360

⁶⁵² Bruno Coppieters, *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies From the Periphery*, Academia Press, 2004, pp.214-217

the reforms.⁶⁵³ The EU does not push the countries in terms of settling the conflicts.⁶⁵⁴ Even though the resolution of the conflicts has been a priority in the ENP rhetoric, this issue was not strongly emphasized, whilst economic and political change became the focus points of the each APs.⁶⁵⁵ According to Stewart, “the lack of timetables for the plans’ implementation also indicates that Brussels has lost the opportunity to make cooperation conditional on measured progress in reforms.”⁶⁵⁶

Differentiated priority areas in the each ENP country’s AP identify the importance level of the conflict and the country’s eagerness to get the EU’s support to find a solution. This can be best observed in the case of Azerbaijanian AP since “contributing to a peaceful solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict represents the first priority area in the Azerbaijan’s AP, but only in the seventh in the Armenia’s, reflecting Baku’s determination to seek a resolution and Yerevan’s tolerance of the status quo”.⁶⁵⁷

As the EU has bilateral relations with each country, this also puts pressure for neutrality on the EU’s stance and limits its actions.⁶⁵⁸ The EU’s neutral position frequently causes incoherent and contradictory policies that are applied in its foreign policy actions as in the case of Azerbaijan and Armenian Action Plans.⁶⁵⁹ The EU has tried to develop a “balanced partnership” with Armenia and Azerbaijan and avoided to explicitly taking side.⁶⁶⁰ As one EU official involved in the AP negotiations stated:

⁶⁵³ Emma J. Stewart, “EU Conflict Management in the South Caucasus: A Preliminary Analysis”, The National Academy for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, Specialist Group Ethnopolitics, University of Nottingham, England, 22-23 November 2007, pp. 9-10

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 9

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 9

⁶⁵⁶ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.14

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁶⁵⁷ Tracey C. German, “Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus”, *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.362

⁶⁵⁸ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.99

⁶⁵⁹ The Azerbaijan AP supports the country’s territorial integrity, whilst the Armenian AP supports the contradictory principle of self-determination of peoples.

Fotios Moustakis and Tracey German, *Securing Europe: Western Interventions Towards a New Security Community*, London: I.B Tauris, 2009, pp.145-146

⁶⁶⁰ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.104

“The EU tried to maintain some level of transparency in these negotiations so that a certain balance of language and commitment would be maintained in the EU approach to Armenia on the one hand, and Azerbaijan on the other.”⁶⁶¹

On the other hand, the hesitant EU’s actions and the EU’s ambiguity over Azerbaijan territorial integrity undermine the EU’s credibility on Azerbaijan side.⁶⁶² As one Azeri official stated “during the negotiations on the AP, Azerbaijan witnessed the first time that the EU sees NK differently from the conflicts in Moldova and Georgia.”⁶⁶³

The different priorities and preferences came out in their ranking policies and highlighting the key objectives of the APs during the negotiations. The EU institutions tried to keep negotiations on APs “as technical and as depoliticized as possible”.⁶⁶⁴ One of the reasons why the EU prefers to apply this approach is that the EU refrains from “the excessive politicization of the APs”.⁶⁶⁵ For instance, the EU prefers to employ more general terminology in defining the key objectives and superficially mentioned on conflict resolution which will predominantly be acquired in long term perspective when Georgia is transformed into a more modern democracy with viable and strong state institutions.⁶⁶⁶ Therefore, Georgia will eventually become an effective and responsible partner for the EU in averting common threats and coordinating new economic projects in the region, it will also become a more attractive state with its democratic institutions and norms for the secessionist entities.

On the contrary, Georgia prefers to use more specific and direct language in ranking its priorities which “are mostly short term and focused on national security issues requiring immediate actions.”⁶⁶⁷ Among other objectives, the most distinctive and pervasive issues on the Georgian agenda revolve around the Georgian national security problems related to its secessionist conflicts and its problematic relations with Russia, as Gegeshidze outlined:

⁶⁶¹ Interview with an EU diplomat, Brussels, February 2007, cited in Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.104

⁶⁶² Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.95-115

⁶⁶³ Interview with Azeri official, Baku, 4 April 2008, cited in Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.104

⁶⁶⁴ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.102

⁶⁶⁵ Leila Alieva, “EU and the South Caucasus”, *Center for Applied Policy Research (C.A.P) Discussion Paper*, 2006, p.12

⁶⁶⁶ Archil Gegeshidze, “Georgia in the Wider Europe Context: Bridging Divergent Interpretations”, CPS International Policy Fellowship Program, 2005/2006, p.21

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.21

“Georgia’s expectations are manifold. The top priority is to engage the EU in the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. To this end, Georgia intends to seek: the EU’s participation in the existing or new formats of negotiations; an enhanced role of the EU Special Representative (EUSR); the EU’s support of the Peace Plan for settlement of the conflict in South Ossetia; inclusion of Georgia’s security issues in the ongoing EU-Russia dialogue.”⁶⁶⁸

Though not on the level as the Georgian government desires, Georgian efforts to internationalize the internal disputes over Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been achieved. The EU’s official discourses on the respect of the territorial integrity of the Georgian state have been constantly emphasizing in the ENP related Country Strategy Papers as well as in the country’s Action Plan. In the Georgian Action Plan, priority area 6 displays the EU’s commitments and its specific range of actions with regard to conflict settlement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia “based on respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders”.⁶⁶⁹ Under this chapter, the EU recognizes the need for an “increasing effectiveness of the negotiating mechanisms” and for the “enhanced efforts at confidence building”.⁶⁷⁰

The EU has recognized the Georgian’s sovereignty and territorial integrity in the ENP AP and pledged to assist confidence building mechanisms together with economic and financial aids to settle the conflict. On the other hand, the Union acts with caution to maintain friendly relations with Russia, hence it has to take a “very pragmatic approach” in its bilateral relations with Georgia in order not to jeopardize its relations with Moscow.⁶⁷¹

The time perspective on conflict settlement does not match between Brussels and Tbilisi and, in contrast to the EU’s approach, Georgia has been keen on searching for quicker solutions for settlements of the conflicts.⁶⁷² The EU’s stance supports Georgian object that searches for a settlement which regards the Georgian territorial integrity, though it does not share the Georgian time perspective by considering that negotiation and confidence-building between parties take time and any hasty decisions might convert the situation into another dead end.⁶⁷³ Moreover, the Union does not want to jeopardize its already complicated and fragile relations with Russia by taking any impatient actions.⁶⁷⁴ On that issue, the two sides

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., p.22

⁶⁶⁹ European Commission, EU/Georgia Action Plan

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Tracey C. German, “Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus”, *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, pp.362-363

⁶⁷² Bruno Coppieters, “The EU and Georgia: Time Perspectives in Conflict Resolution”, *Occasional Paper* No.70, Institute for Security Studies, December 2007, pp.3-29

⁶⁷³ Ibid., pp.3-29

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., pp.3-29

have concerns about the other's timing since "the EU fears that Georgian impatience may be one of the factors leading to an escalation of the conflicts to a violent and unmanageable level, on the other hand, Georgia fears that too much patience and moderation on the EU side may cause the conflicts to be sustained indefinitely."⁶⁷⁵

Common concerns, particularly on the security of the energy routes and the integration of Georgian transportation and energy networks with the EU, and the utilization of the region's rich resources through Georgian partnership, are also addressed in the talks.⁶⁷⁶

III.I.II. THE EU AND ABKHAZIA/SOUTH OSSETIA

The EU's involvement in Georgian's two separatist regions dates back to 1990's and has been mainly comprised of humanitarian assistance, moreover, from 1997 onwards the EU has also committed funds for the rehabilitation programmes in the two conflict zones.⁶⁷⁷ Besides financing the conflict zones for the rehabilitation, the EU has become the largest donor to the South Caucasus region since 2006.⁶⁷⁸ However, political actions needs to be complemented and sustained with the rehabilitation efforts for the resolution of the conflicts in the region in order to prevent any possible renewal of the hostility among the parties.⁶⁷⁹

In terms of conflict prevention/management efforts, the EU seems to have a basic objective of converting the country's democratic system into a more attractable structure to attain peaceful settlement between conflicting groups. As indicated in the ICG report, the EU considers its action in terms of conflict resolution as "its main contribution to conflict resolution should be assisting Georgia create a state based on European values and standards, which ultimately could be more attractive to the South Ossetian and Abkhazia than independence or closer integration with Russia."⁶⁸⁰ This broader understanding might lead to a conclusion that, as Nicu Popescu defends, "every instance of EU policy toward Georgia is

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., p.3

⁶⁷⁶ Archil Gegeshidze, "Georgia in the Wider Europe Context: Bridging Divergent Interpretations", CPS International Policy Fellowship Program, 2005/2006, p.22

⁶⁷⁷ Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff, "The EU as a Conflict Manager? The Case of Georgia and Its Implications", *International Affairs* Vol.86 No.1, 2010, p.3

For further information see "Table 4.1 Timeline of EU policy on Abkhazia and South Ossetia" in Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.70

⁶⁷⁸ Tracey C. German, "Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus", *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.365

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., p.365

⁶⁸⁰ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, p.11

an instance of EU policy towards the conflicts as well”.⁶⁸¹ This understanding reflects the general EU’s approach for its contribution to the Southern Caucasus conflicts, nevertheless this might also mislead in analyzing the actual EU’s capabilities, mechanisms or actions in the conflict resolution/prevention/management field. The EU should have more clear commitments and should initiate more direct contributions to cease the tension in the region. The goal of transforming the Georgian state into a more democratic and attractive country for its minorities, is a broad and long-term objective, hence, the EU has to develop some supplementary mechanisms, more concrete and direct strategy for the resolution of the conflicts in order to sustain stability and to prevent any possible tension which might incite eruption of violence again.

Basically, the EU’s contribution to the resolution of the conflicts has concentrated mainly on the economic assistance and humanitarian projects on rehabilitation of the conflict zones. As indicated in the ICG report:

“The most significant contribution the EU has made to conflict resolution in the South Caucasus is through ground-level implementation of economic and infrastructure rehabilitation program in and around Abkhazia and South Ossetia”.⁶⁸²

Although, the EU’s approach in Abkhazia and South Ossetia seems to have more economic and humanitarian aspects, the latent political objectives behind the EU’s approach towards secessionist entities can also be argued, as an EU official stated:

“1) to decrease the (financial) dependence of the secessionist entities on Russia and to give them an opportunity to diversify their options; 2) to create links between the secessionists and Tbilisi and promote reconciliation; 3) to promote knowledge about Europe and its value.”⁶⁸³

In determining the level and the scope of its involvement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the EU seems to have two complicated options; that is whether it will offer “apolitical money which is not conditional and will only improve the living conditions on the ground, but will not further the conflict settlement process” or it will entail conditions its

⁶⁸¹ Nicu Popescu, “Europe’s Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.8

⁶⁸² Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU’s Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, p.16

⁶⁸³ Interview with EU Official, Brussels, 12 June 2006, cited in Nicu Popescu, “Europe’s Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.14

assistances, but will not be welcome in the conflict areas.⁶⁸⁴ Since Russia provides substantial economic and military support, finance for infrastructural projects, such as road, electricity grids, gas pipeline and railway rehabilitations, the EU's technical and humanitarian assistance projects which aim to decrease the financial dependency on Russia, remain limited on the ground.⁶⁸⁵

As one EU official claims:

“The European Commission can get involved in the conflict areas because its assistance apolitical. It's difficult for the EU to use political conditionality. The EU does not have enough leverage, or the right instruments.”⁶⁸⁶

However, economic problems that the Union has experienced also affect the EU's stance in its neighbourhood. The current euro crisis has decreased the usage of the EU's economic leverage in the region by damaging both the EU's image as a strong economic power and its financial resources that applied in the region.

On the other hand, the secessionist entities' sides are suspicious about the EU's neutrality on its actions by claiming that “organizations supported by the West are agents or spies of the West and work with Georgia against the secessionist entities”.⁶⁸⁷ The lack of knowledge about the EU and its intentions in the region raise questions in the secessionist entities' perception of the EU's actions in the conflicts.⁶⁸⁸ Moreover, the belief that prevails in the secessionist areas that the EU is not powerful enough, not as much as the US, to solve the conflicts in the region, damages the EU's credibility as a security actor in the region.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁴ Nicu Popescu, “Europe's Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.14

⁶⁸⁵ Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.466

⁶⁸⁶ Interview with EU official, July 2006, cited in Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.80

⁶⁸⁷ Nicu Popescu, “Europe's Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.14

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.17

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.17

As an EU official stated:

“[c]oordination in the EU is always a problem”, but on South Ossetia the main problem is not only coherence and coordination between the Commission and the Council, but “the lack of political framework for Commission’s actions on rehabilitation” of conflict zones.”⁶⁹⁰

In the secessionist entities, there is “no common consensus on what the EU is and what it is doing” since its visibility as an actor remains limited.⁶⁹¹ With the acquisition of more visible profile in the region, the EU’s activities and capabilities have begun to be discussed among *de facto* officials in the secessionist regions. Some perceive the scene “through the lenses of zero-sum game” in which Georgia will gain more power with the help of the EU because the EU provides the necessary tools and supports to Georgia, and therefore, the EU is perceived as “being potentially hostile to the secessionist entities”.⁶⁹² The “policy of non-recognition” is crucial in the EU’s relations with the Georgian government.⁶⁹³ Nevertheless, secessionist entities consider the European Union Monitoring Mission’s (EUMM) position in the region is, closer to Georgia, therefore, the relation between EUMM and Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains tense because it is perceived as “the materialization of the West’s pro-Georgian policy”.⁶⁹⁴

On the other hand, there is another group who defends that “the more Europeanized and democratized is Georgia, the better for Abkhazia, a real democracy is less likely to start a new war”.⁶⁹⁵ At that point, the EU should act carefully not only regarding the avoidance of irritating Russia, but also should remain its moderate and neutral approach in its confidence-building efforts and activities.

⁶⁹⁰ Interview with EU official, Brussels, 12 June 2006, cited in Nicu Popescu, “Europe’s Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.16

⁶⁹¹ Nicu Popescu, “Europe’s Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.17

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, p.17

⁶⁹³ Sabine Fisher, “The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM)”, in Giovanni Grevi, Damien Helly and Daniel Keohane (eds.), *European Security and Defence Policy The First 10 Years (1999-2009)*, The European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009, pp.386

⁶⁹⁴ Interviews with representatives of the Abkhaz *de facto* authorities and civil society in Sukhumi, January 2009, cited in Sabine Fisher, “The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM)”, in Giovanni Grevi, Damien Helly and Daniel Keohane (eds.), *European Security and Defence Policy The First 10 Years (1999-2009)*, The European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009, pp.388

⁶⁹⁵ Nicu Popescu, “Europe’s Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.17

Russia and the EU have become at the center of the debates in the two secessionist entities. As indicated in the previous chapter, Abkhazians and South Ossetians' claims about their independence have a major distinction on the ground. While Abkhazia seeks for becoming a fully independent state, South Ossetians' search for reintegration with North Ossetia, implicitly with Russia. The two secessionist entities have different views about Russia on their separatist thinkings. Abkhazia has fears of being isolated in the region, nevertheless does not aspire to be dominated by Russia either. The increased EU's presence in the region has paved a way for Abkhazians, namely by "the emergence of the ENP and the discussion of a Black Sea dimension of the EU policy, have encouraged the debate about the EU in Abkhazia".⁶⁹⁶ Though the EU has been seen as a possible actor balancing the Russia in the region with the belief that "Abkhazia is gradually entering into a zone of direct interest in the EU"⁶⁹⁷, the pro-Russian discourses dominates the Abkhazians foreign policy thinking.⁶⁹⁸ On the contrary, South Ossetia "does not look for geopolitical balances to diversify its future options".⁶⁹⁹ Furthermore, since the EU is involved mainly in infrastructural projects rather than social, political or security projects in the South Ossetia, there has been less knowledge and greater mistrust on the EU's activities in the South Ossetia than in Abkhazia.⁷⁰⁰

The EU has a seat in the South Ossetian Joint Control Commission (JCC)⁷⁰¹, although its contribution is limited since it can only join in economic meetings.⁷⁰² Georgian government actively pursues pro-Western policies and insists on having greater involvement of the EU due to balance the Russian weight in negotiation talks and to resist against the united North Ossetian, South Ossetian and Russian front.⁷⁰³ Similarly, Georgia declares its willingness to withdraw themselves out of the JCC and to replace it with a new format which comprises much international involvement.⁷⁰⁴

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., p.18

⁶⁹⁷ Maxim Gunjia, "Abkhazia i Evrosyouz", cited in Nicu Popescu, "Europe's Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia", *CEPS Working Document No.260*, March 2007, p.18

⁶⁹⁸ Nicu Popescu, "Europe's Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia", *CEPS Working Document No.260*, March 2007, p.19

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., p.19

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., pp.13-19

⁷⁰¹ Sochi Agreement in 1992 provided a joint Russian-Georgian-South Ossetian peacekeeping force alongside with a ceasefire.

http://www.vertic.org/media/Archived_Publications/Matters/Confidence_Building_Matters_No6.pdf, accessed on 24.06.2012

⁷⁰² Emma J. Stewart, "The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?", *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.9

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁷⁰³ Ibid., p.9

⁷⁰⁴ Niklas Nilsson, "Tbilisi Withdrawal from the Joint Control Commission; Proposes New Format for South Ossetia", Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, March 19, 2008

As the then State Minister for Reintegration, Mr. Yakobashvili, emphasizes “existing formats (in which Russia and North Ossetia are clearly biased in favour of South Ossetia) are yet another mechanism to keep the frozen conflicts frozen.”⁷⁰⁵ In such circumstances, the increased presence and assistance of the EU in the new structures might bring relatively more moderate and impartial approaches that are equally distanced to both sides as being an “honest broker”.⁷⁰⁶

Until the 2008 war, the EU did not directly involved in the UN-led Geneva process to find a political solution in Abkhazia. Only three of the EU members (Germany, France and UK) held seats in the UN Secretary General’s Groups of Friends of Georgia (GFG) and presented their political contributions individually to the peace process in Abkhazia.⁷⁰⁷ This different level of the individual Member States’ involvement in the conflict resolution process can be seen as a factor that limits the EU’s ability to seek a greater role as an institution. As an EU official explained: “some Member States were involved in conflict resolution since 1990s means that they have rather established policies in the region. This narrows EU’s corridor for action”.⁷⁰⁸ This can be partly true in terms of considering the supremacy of the national interests of the individual Member States’ in the region. On the other hand, the experiences and knowledge about the historical background throughout the peace efforts since 1990 might provide a useful source for analyzing and detecting the problems that precipitate the deadlocks. Furthermore, these intersected members might strengthen the coordination between other international organizations involved in the peace process. Therefore, this situation can, and should, be converted into a more constructive approach to designate a coherent and unified EU strategy for the resolution of these conflicts.

For the EU, South Ossetia conflict is perceived as a conflict that can be more easily solved than Abkhazia conflict, and it is seen “the ossified structures of the status quo might be broken more easily”.⁷⁰⁹ Georgia has the same thinking and, while leaving Abkhazia at a later stage, prioritized the settlement of the South Ossetian conflict first due to geographical

<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4816>, accessed on 24.06.2012

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁶ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU’s Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, p.i

⁷⁰⁷ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.9

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁷⁰⁸ Interview with an EU official, Berlin, 4 November 2007, cited in Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.467

⁷⁰⁹ Nicu Popescu, “Europe’s Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.16

considerations because Tskhinvali is very close to Tbilisi and pose serious security threats for Georgia.⁷¹⁰ Besides the EU Member States are involved individually in the settlement process in Abkhazia through the UN, however, in South Ossetia, conflict settlement process and activities are mainly conducted by Russia, South Ossetia, North Ossetia and Georgia.⁷¹¹ That means that the EU can gain greater room for the involvement as an institution “without being potentially counterpoised against EU Member States’ national foreign policies”.⁷¹²

“... the EU has been increasing its involvement in such conflicts as Transnistria and South Ossetia where no Member States were involved, but not in Abkhazia or Nagorno-Karabakh where EU Member States are part of the conflict resolution formats. Thus, to some extent the involvement of EU Member States in conflict settlement efforts plays a certain inhibiting role for the EU’s effort to step up its involvement in the conflict areas.”⁷¹³

The EU’s low profile involvement in the conflict resolution has been disrupted with an unsuccessful Georgian attempt to take control over the South Ossetia by force that resulted five-day war between Georgia and Russia in 2008.⁷¹⁴ Especially after the war, the search for greater EU’s involvement in the region with political and economic aid for the Georgian government gained more importance in their policy options. Until the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, the EU was the largest donor in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and although EC-funded projects in the South Ossetia ended since then, the EU still able to support projects for the local population in Abkhazia.⁷¹⁵ In the EaP structure, the EU has also provided additional funding to Georgia nearly 120 million in the period of 2007-2010.⁷¹⁶

The 2008 war forced, in a sense, the EU to take action against deteriorating events in its vicinity, so the EU “became a central conflict resolution as the main party that had

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., p.16

⁷¹¹ Ibid., p.17

⁷¹² Ibid., p.17

⁷¹³ Ibid., p.17

⁷¹⁴ Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.469

⁷¹⁵ European Commission, “EU’s Relations with Georgia, Overview”

http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/eu_georgia/political_relations/index_en.htm, accessed on 05.07.2012

⁷¹⁶ Georgia benefited an additional funding up to 500 million euros to deal with the destructive effects of the 2008 war. Compared to Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia received less within the same period.(Azerbaijan 92 millions euro, Armenia 98.4 millions euro)

European Commission External Relations, The Eastern Partnership Eastern Dimension of the ENP
http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/documents/eu_georgia/enp-eastern_partnership-160909_nomap_en.pdf, accessed on 05.07.2012

brokered the ceasefire”.⁷¹⁷ The EU achieved to mediate a ceasefire between the parties and participated in the Geneva talks as a mediator.⁷¹⁸ Even though this forum had some achievements, such as the withdrawal of Russian troops from Perevi, they were unable to prevent Russia from vetoing the prolongation of the UN and OSCE missions in Georgian conflicts.⁷¹⁹ After the cessation of the UN and the OSCE monitoring missions, the EUMM becomes “the sole international monitoring mission in Georgia”.⁷²⁰

After the 2008 war, the EU has increased its actions in the region and became a significant actor by brokering the ceasefire and deploying peace support operations. The EUMM, deployed as a part of the ESDP within a short time to monitor the peace agreement in Georgia after the 2008 war, has increased the EU’s political profile and its visibility in the region.⁷²¹ Although Abkhazia and South Ossetia have so far denied the Union’s access into the territories under their control, this civilian monitoring mission, EUMM, mandate area covers the whole Georgian territory.⁷²² As a consequence of the Russian military action over South Ossetia, anti-Russian sentiments in young generation has been nourished and reached a peak with the Russian recognition of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.⁷²³

As an unarmed civilian monitoring mission, the EUMM targets to contribute the stabilization, normalization of the conflict zones in Georgian territory and to advance confidence building mechanisms between parties as well as observing and reporting the situation or incidents in the region.⁷²⁴ Mission mandate also covers facilitating the return of the internally displaced persons and improving their conditions.⁷²⁵ The EU’s civilian mission EUMM has still been contributing in the stabilization process of the Georgian territory

⁷¹⁷ Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.470

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., p.469

⁷¹⁹ Nona Mikhelidze, “The Geneva Talks Over Georgia’s Territorial Conflicts: Achievements and Challenges”, *Instituto Affari Internazionali Documenti IAI* 10 I 25, November 2010

⁷²⁰ EU Common Security and Defence Policy, EUMM Georgia <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/eeas/security-defence/eu-operations/eumm-georgia?lang=en>, accessed on 25.07.2012

⁷²¹ Oscar Pardo Sierra, “A Point of No Return? Georgia and the EU One Year After the August War”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst B1 Weekly Briefing* Vol.11 No.15, August 19, 2009, p.3

⁷²² European Union Monitoring Mission official website http://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm, accessed on 24.06.2012

⁷²³ Oscar Pardo Sierra, “A Point of No Return? Georgia and the EU One Year After the August War”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst B1 Weekly Briefing* Vol.11 No.15, August 19, 2009, p.4

⁷²⁴ European Union Monitoring Mission official website http://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm, accessed on 24.06.2012

⁷²⁵ Sabine Fisher, “The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM)”, in Giovanni Grevi, Damien Helly and Daniel Keohane (eds.), *European Security and Defence Policy The First 10 Years (1999-2009)*, The European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009, pp.383-384

through “monitoring activities and promoting communications between the parties via the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM)”.⁷²⁶

The EU became more involved in Georgian conflicts with the introduction of the EUMM and extended its cooperation with various levels of Georgian governance.⁷²⁷ However, as Nicu Popescu argues, its impact on the stabilization of the situation on the ground seems to psychologically and politically dissuading the parties from the hostility, and this does not ensure any “long term guarantee of peace”.⁷²⁸ Moreover, the discussions over the termination of the mission has already begun among the EU members just a few months after the launch of the mission, so the risk for the termination has still been on the agenda.⁷²⁹ Indeed, the EU’s civilian mission in the region, the EUMM, presents “the most politically difficult ESDP missions” and has faced with many challenges stemming from within the EU and also from the situation on the ground.⁷³⁰ The EUMM’s ability to implement their mandates does not only depend on its capability and tools used in the region. The reluctance of the Abkhaz, South Ossetian and Russian sides in providing the EUMM access to Abkhazia, South Ossetia have undermined the EUMM’s ability to implement its mandate and reduce its effectiveness by limiting its activities only within the Georgian side of the conflict.⁷³¹ This also hampers the EU to make a direct contribution to confidence-building in the region.

III.I.III. THE EU AND NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict has differentiated from the Georgian case as mainly being an inter-state conflict. If any renewal of the hostility outbreaks, it can easily become internationalized since all the principle regional actors have different interests and stances, thereby this conflict has a wider impact on the regional basis.⁷³²

⁷²⁶ EU Common Security and Defence Policy, EUMM Georgia <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/eeas/security-defence/eu-operations/eumm-georgia?lang=en>, accessed on 25.07.2012

⁷²⁷ Ibid., pp.384-386

⁷²⁸ Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.469

⁷²⁹ Ibid., p.469

⁷³⁰ For detailed information see Sabine Fisher, “The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM)”, in Giovanni Grevi, Damien Helly and Daniel Keohane (eds.), *European Security and Defence Policy The First 10 Years (1999-2009)*, The European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009, pp.379-390

⁷³¹ Ibid., pp.385-388

⁷³² Fotios Moustakis and Tracey German, *Securing Europe: Western Interventions Towards a New Security Community*, London: I.B Tauris, 2009, p.129

For many reasons, NK conflict is a “top priority” for the EU in the South Caucasus, however, at the same time it is the conflict that the EU is “least involved” in the region.⁷³³ The NK issue presents a “high politics issue” for the EU due to the Member States’ increasing energy interests in the region and possible security threat of renewal of violence in the area.⁷³⁴ Despite this fact, the capacity of the EU institutions remains limited to pursue a more proactive policy towards the NK conflict when one compares the possible threats to the European countries’ security and economic interests.⁷³⁵ The EP also declares the NK conflict as an obstacle for the development of Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as an obstacle to the regional cooperation and the effective implementation of the ENP.⁷³⁶ Therefore, the EU also calls OSCE Member States to coordinate their actions with the EUSR for South Caucasus in order to achieve more effective results in the negotiation process.⁷³⁷ Despite of the severity of the situation for the Union’s security in a wider context, the EU’s direct involvement in the process remains very limited and revolves around providing political support to the ongoing political dialogue between conflicting parties.⁷³⁸

The EU has almost no role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The conflicting parties’ attitudes towards to EU intervention in the process also remain relatively low when one compares this with the Georgian government’s enthusiasm for greater EU involvement in the settlement of the disputes.⁷³⁹ As Nicu Popescu remarks, “unlike Georgia and Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan did not force the issue on the [EU’s] agenda.”⁷⁴⁰ He argues “the

⁷³³ “Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has blocked regional cooperation, fuelled a regional arms race, kept Turkey and Russia poised to intervene in possible hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan and had implications for EU energy interests in the Caspian region.”

Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.95-101

For further information see “Table 5.1 Timeline of EU policy on Nagorno-Karabakh” in *Ibid.*, p.100

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.114-115

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.114-115

⁷³⁶ European Parliament, “European Parliament Resolution on the European Neighbourhood Policy”, 2004/2166(INI), Strasburg, text adopted 19 January 2006

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?jsessionid=9CDFBDD786F709D0169204EFE7B67082.node2?pUbRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0028+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>, accessed on 26.07.2012

⁷³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁸ Fotios Moustakis and Tracey German, *Securing Europe: Western Interventions Towards a New Security Community*, London: I.B Tauris, 2009, pp.142-143

⁷³⁹ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, pp.7-8

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁷⁴⁰ Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.472

EU's non-involvement in NK conflict is the result of a lack of local demand from either Armenia or Azerbaijan".⁷⁴¹

Unlike Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan prefer to follow more balanced way in their relations with Russia. Armenia would not declare its European inclinations, especially in the solution of the NK issue, since it considers Russia as its main strategic partner in the region in order to balance the other regional states' isolationist policies towards Armenia, and moreover, it would not prefer to take any concrete action which might jeopardize its close relations with Russia. On the other hand, Armenia has another dilemma. Although, it would like the EU to play greater role, especially by helping to erode the blockade applied against Armenia by two important regional states, Turkey and Azerbaijan, it is also pleased the status quo around the NK and would not want to endanger its position in the conflict area.⁷⁴² As ICG Report specifies "Armenia sees the EU as an increasingly important partner that can play a role in its foreign policy based on complementary, but it aims to maintain separate and similar relations also with Russia, the US and Iran."⁷⁴³

On the other hand, Azerbaijan is facing with a similar dilemma in its relations with the EU on the NK conflict settlement process. Azerbaijan is not pleased from the current status quo, however, neither it is in favor of greater international involvement. Baku's sensitiveness and skeptical attitude towards international communities' role in conflict settlement, especially since the international recognition of Kosovo independence, narrows the EU's actions in the conflict resolution.⁷⁴⁴ Azerbaijan fears that greater EU involvement in the conflict area would legitimize the secessionist authorities and erode the blockade around the Armenia and NK.⁷⁴⁵

Azerbaijan is also suspicious of both the OSCE Minsk Group activities due to the strong Armenian lobbying in the US and France, and Russia since it is considered as the main ally for Armenia in the South Caucasus.⁷⁴⁶ While Azerbaijan criticizes the OSCE Minsk

⁷⁴¹ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.95-115

⁷⁴² Nicu Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.472

⁷⁴³ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006

⁷⁴⁴ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.95-115

⁷⁴⁵ Nicu Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.472

⁷⁴⁶ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.105

Group and searches for an alternative format, it has also some doubts about a “clear-cut EU support for its position”, thus, it is skeptical for the further EU engagement in the conflict settlement process.⁷⁴⁷ Although Azerbaijan has not actively tried to shape the EU’s policy towards the solution of NK, it expects a more clear support in the EU’s discourses on a solution which respects Azerbaijanian sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁷⁴⁸ However, the unwillingness of the EU to clearly declare that Armenia occupies Azerbaijan territories creates disappointment among Azerbaijanian officials.⁷⁴⁹ Azeris also aim to, as Georgian government, to balance Russian dominance over the peace negotiation and favor the EU as another mediator which has the potential to provide positive incentives and break the hegemonic weight of the traditional supporters of Armenia in the Minsk Group (the US, France and Russia).⁷⁵⁰

In the NK conflict, the EU has a back-seat in the negotiation process and prefers to provide political support to the OSCE activities in the peace efforts.⁷⁵¹ The EU has an ambiguous policy and tentative approach to the NK conflict.⁷⁵² The EU neither puts pressure or incentives to push the conflict resolution process to evolve, nor has a policy in order to strengthen Armenia, Azerbaijan or the NK.⁷⁵³ Some of the funds provided with TACIS to Azerbaijan has been dedicated to assist IDPs from NK, though this humanitarian aspect does not provide a significant impact over the EU’s profile in the conflict and is unlikely influence the situation.⁷⁵⁴

In NK, the EU has not been as active as in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As Popescu defends, “the EU has been waiting for peace in order to act, rather than acting to promote peace”.⁷⁵⁵ He considers that the lack of local demand for the greater EU involvement in the resolution process both from Azerbaijan and Armenia is the “biggest constraint” obstacle for

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid., p.109

⁷⁴⁸ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU’s Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, p.11

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., p.11

⁷⁵⁰ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.9

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁷⁵¹ Fotios Moustakis and Tracey German, *Securing Europe: Western Interventions Towards a New Security Community*, London: I.B Tauris, 2009, p.130

⁷⁵² Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.471

⁷⁵³ Ibid., p.471

⁷⁵⁴ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.99

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., p.110

the EU.⁷⁵⁶ This approach can be supported with the view that the ENP is a “demand-based” initiative that is bounded with the two sides’ efforts and willingness to proceed. Nevertheless, as the ICG points, the EU should involve in the conflicts in much greater scope, such as the participation of the EUSR in the negotiation, sending military and civilian assessment missions to the region to provide a new impetus to the process.⁷⁵⁷

Limited EU involvement in the NK conflict can also be partly explained by “the presence of important external actors, as the UN and the OSCE which have been considered as more experienced and skillful mediator.”⁷⁵⁸ Despite the fact that any viable political settlement is reached in all of the three conflicts, the contributions of the external mediators involved in the peace process cannot be underestimated. As Emma Stewart defends “the peace negotiations headed by OSCE Minsk Group are fragile, and the opening up a new forum for discussion of the conflict could undermine this process, which after all, the EU Member States are committed to through their membership of the OSCE.”⁷⁵⁹ However, the EU has the potential to offer additional values, tools and initiatives that bring a new, fresh or at least a different method which has not been applied yet. However, the effectiveness or the success of the further EU involvement in the conflict resolution process substantially depends on the willingness and commitment of both sides. Local actors who benefit from this chaotic environment such as shareholders in the lucrative black market economy in the countries or some powerful elites that benefit from corrupted regime, and also external players who can gain leverage over the problematic governments, want the status quo instead of reaching a peaceful settlement in these areas.⁷⁶⁰

III.I.IV. THE RUSSIAN IMPACT OVER THE EU’S POLICIES

The Russian factor has not only limited the EU’s strategy on its bilateral relations with the South Caucasus states, but also restrained the EU to designate more clear and consistent

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., p.112

⁷⁵⁷ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU’s Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006

⁷⁵⁸ Dov Lynch, “The EU: Towards a Strategy”, in Dov Lynch (ed.), *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU_ Chaillot Papers* No.65, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2003, p.176

⁷⁵⁹ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.7

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., p.7

strategy towards Transcaucasia. The EU cannot designate a clear policy and take an active stance in responding the instabilities either in the South or the North Caucasus. Indeed, the division between the Member States on the EU's actions in the neighbourhood area is generally categorized as the ones who are critical of Russian's assertive policy in the post-Soviet space and the ones who are skeptical of any significant EU involvement in the Eastern neighbourhood.⁷⁶¹ The latter group is composed of the members who fear to divert the limited EU foreign policy resources towards the South Caucasus or the ones who do not want to jeopardize its relations with Russia.⁷⁶²

Russia has presented the most crucial challenge in the region against further EU engagement. A joint fact finding mission⁷⁶³ that was sent to Abkhazia and South Ossetia submitted a report consisting of policy recommendations that had to be approved by the Member States.⁷⁶⁴ These recommendations were priority scaled down and "they proceeded, not from what was necessary on the ground, but from what would potentially be acceptable to the most skeptical EU Member States".⁷⁶⁵ As Popescu explains:

"EU institution thus adopted the risk-averse and incremental strategy of dosage, not moving too far from what they believe to be the lowest common denominator policy, and putting forward low-politics policy proposals. These included a number of rather uncontroversial policy recommendations for technical activities such as greater support and financing for civil society and youth support in Abkhazia and South Ossetia... These ideas were accepted by EU Member States; however, the strategy was less effective in policy areas that were more controversial."⁷⁶⁶

Russia presence affects the Member States' preferences on the region related issues and leads division among the Member States. The division between Member States has also limited the EU's decisions taken on enhancing its presence in terms of conflict resolution. Some Member States refrain from irritating Russia by taking more concrete and pro-active

⁷⁶¹ Nicu Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.464

⁷⁶² *Ibid.*, p.464

⁷⁶³ Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG). The aim of the fact finding mission has been to investigate the origins and the course of the conflict, including with regard to international law, humanitarian law and human rights. For further information see

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/110370.pdf, accessed on 25.02.2013

⁷⁶⁴ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.80-81

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.80-81

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.81

steps in the conflict and they are unwilling to be seen as taking sides on Russia-Georgia dispute.⁷⁶⁷ As Popescu clarifies:

“Even though the EU was committed to supporting Georgia’s reform process, it was neither ready, nor willing, to challenge Russia by assuming too high a profile in the conflict resolution process in Abkhazia and South Ossetia... The only way to get EU institutions and EU Member States to support a greater EU role in Georgia’s conflicts was to work on issues that were indirectly linked to the conflict settlement.”⁷⁶⁸

Moreover, some members act reluctant to divert limited EU’s resources and political tools for a distant region that has such a complex structure.⁷⁶⁹ Some Member States are suspicious and hesitant about the Georgian political choices and even consider its actions of de-frozen conflicts, instead of maintaining the status quo, are not something strategic and wise.⁷⁷⁰

On the other hand, the small Member States have limited interest in the South Caucasus, and consequently their policy preferences about regional developments are based on the instant reactions and responses to the situations and they do not think that greater EU involvement to the region is necessary.⁷⁷¹ Despite some progress has been achieved to increase the level of their engagement in the region conflicts, through various mechanisms, initiatives as well as the increasing amount of civilian and humanitarian aids, still “the EU retains a low profile, with its little involvement in conflict settlement efforts, no direct involvement in mediation, and an undefined strategy for future involvement”.⁷⁷²

The “Russia-first” approach has been dominating the scope and the level of the EU’s policies towards the South Caucasus region and its conflict resolution processes as well.⁷⁷³ Moscow has still not very keen on further EU’s presence in the region, especially in the conflict resolution efforts, since Russia has virtually dominated the peace process in each case. Its hegemonic power in the negotiation process and military supremacy in the peacekeeping mechanisms in the conflict areas have enabled Russia to control the process or even to veto the decisions against the Russian interest. Hence, Russia would not welcome any greater EU’s involvement in the peace efforts since this would undermine the balance in the region, which has been on the behalf of Russian interests, by fortifying Georgia’s hand in the

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., pp.66-94

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., p.73

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.66-94

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., pp.66-94

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., p.71

⁷⁷² Ibid., p.71

⁷⁷³ Ibid., p.69

negotiation table siding with Western forces. Georgia regards the EU “as the only other actor capable of playing a major political role”.⁷⁷⁴ However, the EU does not undertake such a major role against Russia since such a commitment would be “too fraught with difficulties for the EU to want to intervene”.⁷⁷⁵

Apart from its military presence in the region, Russian political presence in the peace negotiations is highly prominent since it has the veto power or can block any initiatives which would not serve its own interests in the region. When Russia blocked the OSCE’s Georgia Border Monitoring Operation in 2005, Georgia asked the EU for conducting a substitute operation under the EU control that would be out of Russian dominance and would be a more effective and credible BMO for Georgia.⁷⁷⁶ This was a feasible request to do technically, but not politically.⁷⁷⁷ This request created division among the Member States; while some, especially Baltic States were in favor of greater involvement in Georgia, some were suspicious on irritating Russia, and some members were not in favour of diverting EU’s political attention and resources.⁷⁷⁸ As a response to the Georgian request for the border monitoring mission, the EU evaluated four options, and finally decided to apply the most weak and non assertive options by deploying a Border Support Team (BST)⁷⁷⁹ to replace the OSCE Border Monitoring Operation (BMO).⁷⁸⁰ Hence, the EU preferred to take small steps to minimize the potential political costs of such a measure. In that sense, the EUSR Border Support Team (BST) could be considered as a good example of “low cost and low-politics” in the EU’s strategy towards the South Caucasus.⁷⁸¹

The BST was a significant sign of the “clear-cut division” among Member States on the issues regarding for further involvement in the region conflicts.⁷⁸² In 2007, Greece

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., p.71

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., p.71

⁷⁷⁶ Vladimir Socor, “Time Short, Options Narrowing, Call Needed for a New Georgia BMO”, Eurasia Daily Monitor Vol.2 Issues 3, February 21, 2005

[http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=27577&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=176&no_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=27577&tx_ttnews[backPid]=176&no_cache=1), accessed on 26.06.2012

⁷⁷⁷ Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.465

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.465-466

⁷⁷⁹ The EUSR BST was intended to help Georgia mitigate the Georgian Russian tension related to border control, thus it was not designed to address to assist Georgia to solve the secessionist conflicts and did not directly get reaction from Russia.

Nicu Popescu, “Europe’s Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.11

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.10-11

⁷⁸¹ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.78

⁷⁸² Nicu Popescu, “EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, p.465

opposed to the proposal for extending the mandate of the EUSR BST to cover Abkhazia and South Ossetia.⁷⁸³ Many member states have abstained to take more concrete actions in post-Soviet affairs which might get a direct Russian reaction or would divert the limited EU's foreign policy resources.⁷⁸⁴ On the other hand, they do not want to be seen as an obstructionist member who blocks the process because "it's not considered appropriate to be seen as bad European, and consistent obstruction can lead to isolation of a member state or even retaliation where other states respond by vetoing the proposal of the obstructionist state".⁷⁸⁵ In such situation, they do not directly object the decision, however, make excuses that lead the proposal into a deadlock. At that point, as Nicu Popescu identifies, "carousel foot-dragging" makes easier to block the EU's initiatives or actions.⁷⁸⁶

"Given that any single EU member state has veto on foreign policy it is relatively easy to block EU foreign policy initiatives. But carousel foot dragging makes it even easier, because it allows delaying and limiting greater EU involvement role in conflict resolution without one EU country being seen overtly obstructionist."⁷⁸⁷

The improvement of EU-Russia relations is highly important in terms of both decreasing the tension on the "shared neighbourhood" as well as for the security and stability of the whole European continent.⁷⁸⁸ As indicated in the 1995 Commission Communication, "a key element in an eventual resolution of the conflicts will be the attitude of Russia".⁷⁸⁹ Due to the lack of an agreement between the Member States on confronting Russia vis-à-vis the EU's role in the secessionist conflicts in the South Caucasus, despite the growing EU's

⁷⁸³ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.82

⁷⁸⁴ Nicu Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, Nicu Popescu, "Europe's Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia", *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007

⁷⁸⁵ Ana Juncos and Karolina Pomorska, "Does Size Matter? CFSP Committees After Enlargement", *European Integration*, 30(4),p.501, cited in Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.82

⁷⁸⁶ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.83

⁷⁸⁷ Nicu Popescu, "EU and the Eastern Neighbourhood: Reluctant Involvement in Conflict Resolution", *European Foreign Affairs Review* 14, Kluwer Law International BV, 2009, pp.468-469

⁷⁸⁸ Sabine Fisher, "The EU, Russia and the Neighbourhood", *International Security Study Analysis*, December 2010

⁷⁸⁹ European Commission, *Toward a European Union Strategy for Relations with the Transcaucasian Republics*, Communication from Commission, Brussels, 31.05.1995
<http://aei.pitt.edu/4329/1/4329.pdf>, accessed on 18.07.2012

intention and discourses, the issue has not been properly discussed in EU-Russia dialogue.⁷⁹⁰ However, the Member States have still gone through with the problem of a possible Russian reaction towards the greater EU involvement in the Eastern neighbourhood. As Sabine Fisher, a senior research fellow at the European Institute for Security Studies describes the situation:

“Brussels still lacks a clear strategy on how to effectively reconcile its policy towards its eastern neighbourhood with its relations with Russia. In the last ten years, Member States have argued either to engage with the neighbourhood in order to contain Russia, or to avoid deeper engagement with the neighbourhood in order not to jeopardize relations with Russia. Neither strategy has paid off.”⁷⁹¹

Improved relations and enhanced cooperation with Russia would facilitate the EU’s involvement in the resolution processes of the South Caucasian conflicts. Fisher also emphasizes the important link between Russia and the EU’s eastern neighbouring countries:

“The EU needs to think of Russia and the neighbourhood together if it wants to avoid negative ramifications in either direction. Neither a Russia-first approach nor a neighbourhood-first approach at the expense of the other can be the driving force behind its approach. Clearly, the EU has an interest in deeper integration with the countries in its eastern neighbourhood. But it also has to take into consideration the interdependencies that exist in the region and shape its policy accordingly.”⁷⁹²

Throughout 2000s, the EU’s attention and visibility have shown an accelerated graphic on the issues related to the developments in the three South Caucasus states in the EU’s foreign policy agenda. However, the level of its involvement still remains tentative and vague and it is far from providing a sufficient base for the political settlement or ending the deadlocks in the negotiations.

The EU keeps its level of involvement in the region’s conflicts as low-profile and has applied “dosage strategy” which refers to conduct many small steps to expand their actions

⁷⁹⁰ Emma J. Stewart, “EU Conflict Management in the South Caucasus: A Preliminary Analysis”, The National Academy for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, Specialist Group Ethnopolitics, University of Nottingham, England, 22-23 November 2007, p. 7

⁷⁹¹ Sabine Fisher, “The EU, Russia and the Neighbourhood”, *International Security Study Analysis*, December 2010

http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/The_EU_Russia_and_the_neighbourhood.pdf, accessed on 12.12.2012

⁷⁹² Ibid.

without irritating Russia and risking their positions.⁷⁹³ The EU Council and the Commission have been pro-active and sponsored the new initiatives in the framework of low-politics issues since this is the only way to get approval of the Member States without getting a direct Russian's reaction. Therefore, the EU prefers to use "dosage as a strategy to achieve a greater EU involvement in conflict resolution", as in the case of the deployment of police experts to the region which can be considered as the first step towards the greater EU involvement in civilian aspect of crisis management in the conflicts.⁷⁹⁴

III.II. OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTORS IN THE CONFLICTS AND THE EU

International organizations, which have been involved in the negotiation processes, have played a significant role in the resolution and settlement processes in the South Caucasus conflicts with varying degrees and efficiencies. In this part of the third chapter, the international organizations' efforts involved in the peace negotiations of the South Caucasus conflicts and their interplay with the EU, as a newly engaged actor, in the conflict resolution process will be discussed. "What can the EU add to the ongoing processes?", "Does the Union offer a different approach and provides a fresh, new dimension to the dialogue or do it just support the existing framework initiated by other international actors in the region?", "What has the EU done so far and what could offer more in order to contribute to the peace to prevail in the region?" are briefly analyzed under this section. The coordination between other international organizations and supplementary policies of the EU to the OSCE Minsk Groups (mainly in South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict) and the UN activities (in Abkhazia) for stability and peace in the region are outlined.

International organizations can provide positive outcomes by promoting peace in the conflict areas through mediation or using some other tools as empowering states by inviting them to become a member of the organization with some conditions such as enhancing democratic norms and values.⁷⁹⁵ As discussed in the previous section, the EU prefers to contribute to the stability of the region by promoting democratic values in the three post-Soviet states without using its most influential political leverage, membership. As Leila

⁷⁹³ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.66-94

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.83

⁷⁹⁵ Charlotte Hille, *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus*, Boston: Brill Academic Publisher, 2010, p.315

Alieva defends, the process of democratization through European integration presents a powerful tool which might offer significant outcomes to have an impact on the reforms' implementation.⁷⁹⁶

“Unlike the Council of Europe or OSCE, the EU has a strong advantage of the incentives in greater integration. This might be implemented in case if the EU looks beyond a mere cooperation with the governments of these states and become aware that the reform potential of the societies is often greater than it is performed by the official policies. It also requires a principled approach to the evaluation of reform implementation as reflected in the National Action Plans, as well as its balanced approach to the conflicts.”⁷⁹⁷

Irakli Alasania, Georgia's former UN ambassador also mentions the effects of the EU's transformative power over the conflicts by stating:

“If we can show the Abkhaz that what happened in Europe with countries that transformed from totalitarian regimes to democratic regimes, and how they secured ethnic identity in a democratic Europe, they will be exposed to the values that will help Abkhaz and Georgians to coexist together in the European Union.”⁷⁹⁸

The EU's attraction is highly crucial at that point to guarantee the minorities that they can live peacefully within Georgia.

The US Vice President, Joe Biden, has also stressed the importance of softer approaches to solve the both regions' problems by enhancing a stable, prosperous and democratic Georgia which would be indeed more attractive both for Abkhazia and South Ossetia than Russia.⁷⁹⁹ The urgency and the crucial consequences of the tension arose in the region make these issues a priority in the Euro-Atlantic relations and force them to redefine a strategy not only towards the Eastern neighbouring countries, but also towards Russia.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁶ Leila Alieva, “EU and the South Caucasus”, *Center for Applied Policy Research (C.A.P) Discussion Paper*, 2006, p. 3

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁷⁹⁸ A Year After the War, South Ossetia and Abkhazia Seek Different Paths, Radio Free Europe, august 06, 2009 http://www.rferl.org/content/A_Year_After_The_War_South_Ossetia_And_Abkhazia_Seek_Different_Paths/1794249.html, accessed on 02.05.2012

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁰ Nona Mikhelidze, “After the 2008 Russia-Georgia War: Implications for the Wider Caucasus and Prospects for Western Involvement in Conflict Resolution, Background Paper of the Conference on “The Caucasus and Black Sea Region: European Neighbourhood Policy and Beyond”, Istituto Affari Internazionali, 6-7 February 2009, p.3 http://ancien.operationspaix.net/IMG/pdf/IAI_After2008RussiaGeorgiaWar_ImplicationsWiderCaucasus_ProspectsWesternInvolvement_ConflictResolution.pdf, accessed on 22.05.2012

However, this has been a controversial subject since “many European states share with Russia common interests and thus they are not willing to sacrifice these interests at the cost of further destabilization in the South Caucasus”.⁸⁰¹ In that case, the EU should be more precautionary in defining its priorities and strategic ties between regional powers in order to avoid jeopardizing its interests as well as its prestige in the region. Nicholas Whyte, Director of Crisis Groups’s Europe Program, states:

“The EU is trying to define its role in a new neighbourhood which is neither at war nor at peace. If the EU fails to implement its strategic vision for a secure neighbourhood, its credibility in the region, and generally vis-à-vis Russia and the U.S., will suffer. More troublingly, if the South Caucasus conflicts continue to deteriorate, the EU may find itself unprepared for responding to wars among its neighbours”.⁸⁰²

The EU’s late and hesitant involvement in the South Caucasus conflicts has faced with the obstacles rooted from the crowd structure of the negotiation platforms and the complicated nature of the conflicts. There is a significant international presence in the region ranging from the UN and the OSCE, the US, Russia to other regional players. Emma Stewart indicates that the EU’s minor role in the region can also be explained due to the crowded actors in the region, such as the UN, OSCE and NGOs as well as state actors like the US, Iran, Russia and Turkey.⁸⁰³

An informal division of labour can be observed in the area where the UN has taken the leading role in the negotiations between Georgia and the separatist Abkhazia, whilst the OSCE has been active in the Georgia-South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.⁸⁰⁴ Additionally, the Council of Europe has a transformative role of promoting democratic standards in the region.⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., p.3

⁸⁰² The EU and Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus, Tbilisi/Brussels, 20 March 2006
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2006/europe/the%20eu%20and%20conflict%20resolution%20in%20the%20south%20caucasus.aspx>, accessed on 28.04.2012

⁸⁰³ Emma J.Stewart, “EU Conflict Management in the South Caucasus: A Preliminary Analysis”, The National Academy for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, Specialist Group Ethnopolitics, University of Nottingham, England, 22-23 November 2007, p.7

⁸⁰⁴ Dov Lynch, “ The EU: Towards a Strategy”, in Dov Lynch (ed.), *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU_ Chaillot Papers* No.65, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2003, p.175

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

The US is also an actor which has important interests in the South Caucasus. Lynch indicates that the US interests in the region before September 11 had revolved around three main issues which were “promoting conflict settlement; ensuring the development and transportation of Caspian Sea energy resources; and preventing the rise of a single hegemonic power in the region.”⁸⁰⁶ These were similar to the EU’s stance on the region. Nevertheless, the US interests in the South Caucasus have also increased since September 11, specifically with regard to security related concerns. The September 11 attacks have brought a new dimension to the US interests in the region. After September 11, the US has also emphasized new three interests: “military access, over-flight rights and basing rights” which heavily signify the importance of South Caucasus region for the US security.⁸⁰⁷ Therefore, following its 2002 Prague Summit, NATO enhanced its role and dialogue with the regional countries.⁸⁰⁸ The US, like the EU does, has also supported the three South Caucasian countries’ democratic transitions through democracy-promotion programmes, financial funds and aid agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) administered by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).⁸⁰⁹ However, the strategies of the US show some differences since the US has no additional rewards as the EU has, and has sometimes imposed sanctions towards the South Caucasus countries such as Azerbaijan.⁸¹⁰ The US ex-Deputy Assistance Secretary of State for European affairs identifies three main issues affecting the EU and the US policy in the South Caucasus: European enlargement debate (between who favour expanding Europe borders including Ukraine and Caucasus and who wish to limit the EU and NATO enlargement to the Balkans); ambivalence (due to the region’s complexity); and the lack of coherent policy (there is no consensus in the West defining on what a coherent policy towards the South Caucasus).⁸¹¹

The presence of such wide range and important actors in the region has also affected the EU’s strategic thinking over the region. The existence of powerful and influential regional

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ Syzanna Vasilyan, “Dizygotic Twins: The US and The EU Prooting Democracy in the South Caucasus”, Conference Paper, ISA Conference USA, February 15-18 2009
http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/3/1/4/1/9/pages314195/p314195-1.php, accessed on 06.02.2013

⁸¹⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹¹ Ronald Asmus, Thomas De Waal and Peter Semneby, “Europe and the South Caucasus: The Best Approach”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 4, 2010
http://carnegieeurope.eu/events/?fa=3054&solr_hilite=, accessed on 16.01.2013

powers, as Russia, Iran and Turkey, as well as the increased interests of the US and many other European countries -due to the growing strategic significance of the region's energy resources- have made South Caucasus conflicts both a challenging task and also an opportunity for the EU to enhance its profile as an international security actor in world affairs.

As the UN and the OSCE have been actively engaged to the region's conflicts since 1990's, they have become experienced and skillful mediators over the issues.⁸¹² Their experience in dealing with such crisis might provide the EU a constructive basis in facilitating the peace process since the EU is a relatively new actor in this field.⁸¹³ The UN has involved in the Abkhazian conflict from the early days of the violence outbreak and deployed UN military observers (UNOMIG) to patrol the border area of Abkhazia and Georgia.⁸¹⁴ Many resolutions have adopted by the UN Security Council to end the conflict, however, its success and effectiveness remain limited and no concrete political solution has been achieved.

These organizations have also faced limitations either because of their organizational structure, or the nature of the conflicts. Moreover, neither any viable and widely accepted recommendation, nor any positive political settlements of these conflicts have still been produced. The EU has the potential to bring new prospects to the process and might offer a different approach to bring the parties under a common perspective that can enhance trust and cooperation between the parties. As indicated in the ICG report,

“With its reputation as an honest broker, access to a range of soft and hard power tools, and the lure of greater integration into Europe, the EU has a greater role to play, and offers added value to complement the UN and the OSCE”.⁸¹⁵

On the other hand, the EU's activities are supposed not to duplicate the other international organization's efforts in the region. Moreover, it should complement and support their initiatives. When the EU launched the EUMM in Georgia, the UN and the OSCE had

⁸¹² Dov Lynch, “The EU: Towards a Strategy”, in Dov Lynch (ed.), *The South Caucasus: A Challenge for the EU_ Chaillot Papers* No.65, Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, December 2003, p.176

⁸¹³ Ron Asmus, Svante E.Cornell, Antje Herrberg and Nicu Popescu, “Internationalizing the Georgia-Abkhazia Conflict Resolution Process: Why a Greater European Role Is Needed”, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Conflict Resolution: Policy Brief, June 2008, p.5

⁸¹⁴ Charlotte Hille, *c in the Caucasus*, Bostan: Brill Academic Publisher, 2010, p.318

⁸¹⁵ The EU and Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus, Tbilisi/Brussels, 20 March 2006

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/media-releases/2006/europe/the%20eu%20and%20conflict%20resolution%20in%20the%20south%20caucasus.aspx>, accessed on 28.04.2012

already been in the region for several years, however, the EU mission did not overlap with the other international organizations, and on the contrary, it supplemented each other.⁸¹⁶ After the OSCE mission and the termination of UNOMIG due to the Russian' veto on prolongation of the mission, the EUMM remains the only mechanism in Georgian conflicts which monitors and controls the situation in conflict areas.

The deployment of the EUMM within a short time after the outbreak of war is considered as an achievement of the EU.⁸¹⁷ This decision is also the proof that the EU is actually capable of providing necessary mechanisms in contributing to peace and stability in the region if it is determined on its commitment to contribute to the resolution of these conflicts. Moreover, the EU has the capability to overcome the cohesion problem among the Member States.

Through the OSCE Minsk Group, the OSCE has been active in the negotiation processes both concerning South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts. The OSCE has been considered as the most successful and most credible neutral actor in conflict prevention by decreasing the escalation of potential conflicts with its skillful work team and effective search missions.⁸¹⁸ However, "the lack of political weight and substantive carrot" has diminished its effective role in negotiating process.⁸¹⁹

Though its activities have been hampered by "its broad membership and lack of enforcement mechanisms", the OSCE is the key external actor in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.⁸²⁰ On the other hand, the EU has more leverage on the South Caucasus countries by having important trade links and being a key trading partner for the region countries, and thus, this potential might provide a considerable leverage for the EU to contribute to the negotiated settlement in the region's conflicts.⁸²¹

The OSCE Minsk Group has some limitations in terms of reaching and compromising the parties for a peaceful settlement. Bernard Fassier, the then French co-chairman of the

⁸¹⁶ Sabine Fisher, "The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM)", in Giovanni Grevi, Damien Helly and Daniel Keohane (eds.), *European Security and Defence Policy The First 10 Years (1999-2009)*, The European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2009, pp.388

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., pp.386

⁸¹⁸ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, "The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, *MIRICO Report Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.39

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., p.39

⁸²⁰ Fotios Moustakis and Tracey German, *Securing Europe: Western Interventions Towards a New Security Community*, London: I.B Tauris, 2009, p.143

⁸²¹ Ibid., pp.143-144

OSCE Minsk Group, clarified the position of the OSCE and the potential EU contribution to the OSCE's activities towards the resolution of the NK conflict as follows: "The Minsk Group is a political forum. It can put forward political ideas. However, it does not have the financial resources to implement those ideas."⁸²² He also emphasizes that the EU has the economic capacity to complement the political decisions taken in the OSCE platform.⁸²³ Solana describes the cooperation between the EU and the OSCE as "natural born partners" by considering the number of OSCE participating states which is also the EU member, and the EU's contribution in the OSCE budget.⁸²⁴

The OSCE's credibility and effectiveness have also been questioned in terms of the Russian presence in decision making procedures on vulnerable issues such as the prolongation of BMO in Georgia or budget approvals which provide leverage and sometimes concession to Russia on conducting conflict resolution processes in the region.⁸²⁵ Russian veto power in the UN and the OSCE illustrates the most crucial challenge that the two organizations have faced. Russia has strengthened its position by vetoing the extension of UN mission in Abkhazia and OSCE mission in South Ossetia, therefore, the EU mission remains the only international presence that monitors the *de facto* borders.⁸²⁶

The Georgian government requests the EU to play more constructive role in the conflict resolution process due to counterweight Russian dominance in the talks and to put pressure on Russia to withdraw its bases from Georgia which was agreed in 1999 OSCE meeting in Istanbul.⁸²⁷ This issue that is linked to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) which foresees a reduction of troop levels across the continent, is a security

⁸²² BBC Monitoring Select Central Asia and South Caucasus, 27 January 2005, p12, *Turan news agency*, Baku, 1616GMT, 27 January 2005, cited in Tracey C. German, "Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus", *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.367

⁸²³ Ibid., p.367

⁸²⁴ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, "The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, *MIRICO Report Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.39

⁸²⁵ Vladimir Socor, "Time Short, Options Narrowing, Call Needed for a New Georgia BMO", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Vol.2 Issues 3, February 21, 2005
[http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=27577&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=176&no_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=27577&tx_ttnews[backPid]=176&no_cache=1), accessed on 26.06.2012

⁸²⁶ A Year After the War, South Ossetia and Abkhazia Seek Different Paths, Radio Free Europe, August 06, 2009
http://www.rferl.org/content/A_Year_After_The_War_South_Ossetia_And_Abkhazia_Seek_Different_Paths/1794249.html, accessed on 02.05.2012

⁸²⁷ "Georgia: Tbilisi Lobbies EU for Border Monitors, Harder Stance on Russia", Radio Free Europe, April 12, 2005
<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1058397.html>, accessed on 26.06.2012

matter for European countries along with the Georgian government.⁸²⁸ As the then foreign minister of Georgia, Salome Zurbishvili, clearly stated:

“We have been requesting it, we have been looking at all possible to replace the BMO mission of the OSCE after the Russians vetoed it... and of course, we looked in the first place to an organization where Russians do not have the right of veto and which is not an organization that will be looked at as a confrontational organization in any sense. The EU, for that, is a perfect organization.”⁸²⁹

Similarly, the EU can have a relatively positive stance in the NK settlement process compared to Abkhazia and South Ossetia since the efforts conducted by the OSCE Minsk Group has been considered more neutral in contrast to Russia-dominated negotiation framework in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.⁸³⁰

According to Emma Stewart, the EU’s main task in the South Caucasus mediation efforts “should be to coordinate current policy lines and smooth out the differences between them”.⁸³¹ However, the EU has already its own coordination problems within the Union itself.⁸³² Therefore, the EU should increase its own internal consistency; horizontal, vertical and institutional consistency, in order to become an effective global actor in its relations with third countries as well as in its cooperation with other international organizations.⁸³³

In the Georgia Action Plan, the EU stresses “the need for a constructive cooperation between interested international actors in the region, including the EU and the OSCE Member States, on additional efforts contributing to peaceful settlement mechanisms in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.”⁸³⁴ This approach reflects the EU’s cooperative attitude in solving the region’s

⁸²⁸ Ibid.

⁸²⁹ “Georgia: Foreign Minister Pushes for Greater EU Involvement in the South Caucasus”, Radio Free Europe, March 02, 2005

<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1057775.html>, accessed on 26.06.2012

⁸³⁰ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.105

⁸³¹ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.16

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁸³² Ibid., pp.16-17

⁸³³ Elsa Tulmets, “Can the Discourse on ‘Soft Power’ Help the EU to Bridge Capability-Expectation Gap?”, *European Political Economy Review* No.7, Summer 2007, p.215

⁸³⁴ European Commission, EU/Georgia Action Plan

conflict and its “inclination towards multilateral action” in enhancing additional mechanisms together with other international organizations in the region.⁸³⁵

The coordination and joint efforts in the negotiation processes between the UN, the OSCE and the EU, can provide some advantages for the continuation and consistency in the settlement process, though it also has some risks to undermine the credibility of international organizations’ capabilities when or if the process is stuck in a deadlock.⁸³⁶

“The combined mediation effort of the OSCE, the UN and the EU can be seen as strength, combining of forces and putting parties under pressure to take the negotiation process seriously and having the conflict prominent on the international agenda, but it can also be regarded as a weakness in the process. If the negotiations fail, what credibility the UN, the OSCE and the EU may have will be lost.”⁸³⁷

The EU prefers to apply a “softer approach” to conflict resolution by providing economic and humanitarian assistance and by supporting the existing frameworks of the OSCE and the UN.⁸³⁸ The EU supports the OSCE Minsk Group as a “legitimate mediation mechanism” and states that it will increase their political support to the Minsk Group in conflict settlement efforts.⁸³⁹ The EU has been involved in the Geneva process as an “official co-chair of the Geneva process” along with the UN and OSCE, so its presence and its political weight in the resolution process have reached higher than it had been before.⁸⁴⁰ The Commission develops close cooperation with other international actors in the region, namely the UN and OSCE, and finances a number of projects that are aimed to increase the confidence building and economic development in Georgia.⁸⁴¹

The EU is represented in the Minsk Group by individual Member States, however, this is not enough for the EU to provide a coherent and effective policy in the process, therefore, it

⁸³⁵ Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff, “The EU as a Conflict Manager? The Case of Georgia and Its Implications”, *International Affairs* Vol.86 No.1, 2010, p.6

⁸³⁶ Charlotte Hille, *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus*, Boston: Brill Academic Publisher, 2010, p.320

⁸³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.320

⁸³⁸ Georgi Kamov, “EU’s Role in Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Eastern Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Areas”, Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales, 2006, p.63

⁸³⁹ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.104

⁸⁴⁰ Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff, “The EU as a Conflict Manager? The Case of Georgia and Its Implications”, *International Affairs* Vol.86 No.1, 2010, pp.7-8

⁸⁴¹ Narine Ghazaryan, “The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.227

should be supplemented with additional political initiatives, i.e the inclusion of the EUSR into the negotiation processes which would help the EU to speak with one voice.⁸⁴² Additionally, France's co-chairman can be replaced by another diplomat who will represent the EU, however, France refuses such a replacement and also does not support the idea that "Europeanization of its co-chairman of the OSCE Minsk Group, either by ceding its place to the EUSR or acting as the EU voice in the Minsk Group."⁸⁴³ The national foreign policies of the Member States have also damaged to exhibit a single, consistent EU policy towards the conflicts.

"Many EU states had established unilateral approaches to the region, which was significantly, reduced any scope for autonomy for EU action in the region. The presence of such-well defined national policies reduced to almost zero the EU's ability to pursue a more interventionist policy towards the conflict."⁸⁴⁴

III.III. THE CAPABILITY-EXPECTATION GAP BETWEEN THE EU AND THE SOUTH CAUCASIAN STATES

After the failed attempt to handle the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1990's and the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, the EU realized its necessity to arrange a common approach and became eager to develop its own "crisis management capabilities".⁸⁴⁵ Throughout 1990's, and still, the EU has been trying to strength its own internal cohesion on acting in uniform. As examined in the first chapter, with the treaty revisions and institutional developments, the EU has tried to gain its own capabilities and internal cohesion in order to stand as a powerful and single-headed international actor in the world affairs.

"Since the failure of conflict management in the early and mid-1990's, the Union's capabilities have been improved significantly, enabling it now to undertake both civilian and military operations, that is being able to back up its diplomatic efforts

⁸⁴² Tracey C. German, "Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus", *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, 2007, p.367

⁸⁴³ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p.105

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.114-115

⁸⁴⁵ Stephan Wolff and Annemarie Peen Rodt, "Lessons From the Balkans: The ENP as a Possible Conflict Management Tool?", in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.113-115

with credible threats of force where necessary. This evolution of expertise at both headquarters and ground level demonstrate a significant process of lesson-learning at the institutional and operational levels of the EU conflict management capabilities.”⁸⁴⁶

After the Balkan failure, the EU realized the fact that it should support its soft power by hard power (military capabilities) in order to be an effective and successful actor in the conflict resolution.⁸⁴⁷ Gordon, Rodt and Wolff argue that the EU’s dependency on NATO’s military assets and capabilities might harm the EU’s autonomously decision-making and this dependency will “decrease the Union’s capability of autonomous action in situations where NATO resources are stretched or where disagreements within NATO prevent the use of resources by the EU”.⁸⁴⁸ Therefore, from 1999, the EU Member States have committed themselves to create the EU’s own military and civilian crisis management capabilities which will be ready to be deployed and respond to the required mission duties.⁸⁴⁹

The Lisbon Treaty has improved the CFSP capabilities by introducing some important innovations which will provide constructive effects over the EU’s role as a conflict manager.⁸⁵⁰ All these achievements and improvements have strengthened the EU’s capabilities; however, “the principle of unanimity” is still the most crucial obstacle in the EU structure which limits the optimum usage of available CFSP instruments.⁸⁵¹ The Member States’ power to veto on any decision taken in the CFSP which might endanger their interests or their national foreign policy preferences, has posed an important obstacle for the EU to take more rapid and concrete actions towards international crisis such as in the case of Cyprus position which block the launch of EU-Azerbaijan AP negotiations due to Azerbaijan’s relations with Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.⁸⁵²

Stephen Wolff categorizes the EU’s capabilities under three sections: “capability to act” which refers to the EU’s political will, personnel and technical hardwares with

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., p.126

⁸⁴⁷ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.33-34

⁸⁴⁸ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, “The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, *MIRICO Report Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.29

⁸⁴⁹ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.34-35

⁸⁵⁰ Stephan Wolff and Annemarie Peen Rodt, “Lessons From the Balkans: The ENP as a Possible Conflict Management Tool?”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.118-119

⁸⁵¹ Ibid., pp.118-119

⁸⁵² Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.102-103

institutions and instruments; “capability to fund” the short and long term operations; and “capability to coordinate and cooperate” both within the EU, vertical and horizontal, and with the third parties and international organizations.⁸⁵³ Apart from improving its foreign policy tools, by revising all of its capabilities, the EU needs to arrange its internal unity to develop a concrete and well-defined policy towards the South Caucasus region and its conflicts.

According to Hill, the increased expectations which the EU is supposed to expose as a powerful and an effective international actor pose important challenges to the EU’s actual capabilities in terms of its ability to agree, its resources and the instruments at its disposal.⁸⁵⁴ He specifies “the consequential gap which has opened up between capabilities and expectation is dangerous”, and there are basically two reasons there is a capability-expectation gap still exists:

“Firstly because a coherent system and full actorness are still far from realization; and secondly because this inconvenient fact has been ignored (in Brussels as much as the demandeur states) in the heady swirl of international transition. Not just in terms of substantive resources-money,arms, room for immigrants-but in terms of the ability to take decisions and hold to them.”⁸⁵⁵

Emma Stewart considers the EU’s problem on its conflict resolution efforts mainly derives from, first, Member States’ hesitancy over confronting Russia in the region, and secondly, from the lack of (adequate) instruments and resources to address the challenge.⁸⁵⁶ The absence of internal coherence continues to pose greater drawbacks to aim of the Union to expand its role in world politics.⁸⁵⁷ She concludes that the EU “has adopted some of the language of conflict resolution without developing the necessary tools and expertise that it needs to carry out the task.”⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵³ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, “The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, *MIRICO Report Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, pp.4-22

⁸⁵⁴ Christopher Hill, “Capability-Expectation Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe’s International Role”, *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol 31 No.3, September 1993, p.315

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.318

⁸⁵⁶ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.17

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.17

⁸⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.17

The EU's willingness of enhancing its credibility to conduct in the conflict resolution process is very important. The positive conditionality in the ENP does not respond the complicated and unclear prospect that the EU offers to the ENP countries at the end. Hence, the credibility problem is the most crucial drawback of the policy since the initiative is too vague and too little is on offer by the EU.⁸⁵⁹

Even though, the EU's capabilities, both civilian and military aspects, have been improved and diversified throughout years, the EU's actions outside the Western Balkans is still considered as limited and low-intensified.⁸⁶⁰ Nicu Popescu illustrates the EU's strategy outside the Balkans as "butterfly security policy" which implies to "moving in and quickly out from the conflict zones" and "being very preoccupied with exit strategies", therefore, the long-term objectives of stabilization are generally left to the UN or other international organizations.⁸⁶¹

Nevertheless, the EU can provide an added value that is based on its experience in the Central and Eastern Europe.⁸⁶² Though its success and the readiness of the Union are open to discussion, the EU's capabilities in terms of civilian and military aspects have been improved.⁸⁶³ For instance, the EU was able to mobilize its tools in the Western Balkans stabilization process, through stability pacts, and achieved positive outcomes in terms of channeling its mechanisms, however, in these cases the "policy of conditionality" was backed up with a potential membership prospect that enabled the EU to gain some level of success in terms of conflict management.⁸⁶⁴ On the other hand, the EU lacks such leverage in the South Caucasian cases.

The most important leverage which provides the EU to have effect over the concerning countries is the potential accession to the Union at the end, as in the Western Balkans. As Semneby indicates:

⁸⁵⁹ Narine Ghazaryan, "The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations", in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.235-236

⁸⁶⁰ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.33-35

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.35

⁸⁶² Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, pp.10-11

⁸⁶³ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, "The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, *MIRICO Report Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, pp.28-30

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.29

“[An] EU membership perspective is not present in the South Caucasus, unlike the Balkans. It is indeed the European membership perspective that has played the most important role in the Balkans in terms of reforms that have been undertaken.”⁸⁶⁵

The “policy of conditionality” provides a distinct advantage for the EU to be perceived as more credible, so the concerned countries are becoming more inclined to make compromises where they have a higher chance to attain membership status.⁸⁶⁶ As Emma Stewart asserted, the EU has “less leverage in the South Caucasus because of the lack of enlargement perspective, and is therefore more reliant on its capabilities rather than its power of attraction.”⁸⁶⁷

The EU has had other comparative advantages in the cases of the Western Balkans such as the EU’s willingness to engage in conflict resolution process with all its possible tools and having more knowledge about the region compared to the South Caucasus.⁸⁶⁸ As examined in detail, conflict resolution requires a comprehensive approach with a wide range of tools and institutions which would channel the required assistance and mechanisms to the conflicting parties. Without comprehensive, clear and long-term commitments, the EU’s activities and efforts in the South Caucasus conflicts would be less effective. The EU has maintained sufficient tools to settle or to pacify these conflicts, and therefore, the EU’s determination in reaching a peaceful solution in the region would stimulate the positive outcome.

In all three cases in the South Caucasus, factors of readiness, knowledge about the region, membership prospect, have undermined the Union’s actions to the resolution of the conflicts. Since the membership prospect has not been an ultimate goal in the ENP APs, the EU has “less leverage in terms of conditionality compliance” in the South Caucasus states, and consequently, in their conflict resolution negotiations.⁸⁶⁹ Furthermore, the EU has “relatively few capabilities in terms of intelligence and understanding the conflicts” in the

⁸⁶⁵ “South Caucasus. Prospects for Regional Stability Pact Recede”, Radio Free Europe, May 12, 2006 <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1068369.html>, accessed on 02.05.2012

⁸⁶⁶ Stephan Wolff and Annemarie Peen Rodt, “Lessons From the Balkans: The ENP as a Possible Conflict Management Tool?”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.126-127

⁸⁶⁷ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.3

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁸⁶⁸ Stephan Wolff and Annemarie Peen Rodt, “Lessons From the Balkans: The ENP as a Possible Conflict Management Tool?”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.126-127

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.128

South Caucasus since it lacks the sufficient knowledge about the conflicts' nature, region and conflicts' dynamics.⁸⁷⁰

According to Nye, "soft power" refers to the ability to affect the behaviors of others and to shape their preferences without resorting the use of threats or punishments.⁸⁷¹ Soft power is also the ability to attract people and their perception to accept or to adjust their thinking similar to your point of view in order to achieve the outcome that you want at the end without using coercive methods.⁸⁷² The EU relies on its civilian means to handle with security issues rather than to resort military assets.⁸⁷³ From this point of view, the ENP is mostly considered as a way to improve the EU's soft power in neighbouring countries.⁸⁷⁴

The ENP presents a unique policy for the Union's foreign policy since it unites different geographical and political regions under a single framework, and the same time, this feature of the ENP initiative also drags the policy into a serious debate over its consistency and effectiveness.⁸⁷⁵ On the other hand, the ENP can be considered as exerting the EU's soft power over the neighbouring countries.⁸⁷⁶ With the introduction of the ENP, the EU aims to have a legitimate ground to enhance its democratic norms and values to be materialized "through attraction instead accession".⁸⁷⁷ Emma Tulmets argues that the ENP is the most significant example of the EU's soft power which responds to the external and internal expectations.⁸⁷⁸ The ENP is a moderate policy that responds the external expectations whilst balancing the internal demands and interests, however, this policy is still facing a crucial consistency problems deriving from its internal structure.

As discussed before, the lack of membership prospect with the ENP countries compared to the Western Balkans, the EU has less leverage in terms of conditionality compliance, so the EU often suffers from the "lack of credibility in terms of its capability to

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid., p.129

⁸⁷¹ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs, 2004, pp.1-10

⁸⁷² Ibid., p.6

⁸⁷³ Elsa Tulmets, "Can the Discourse on 'Soft Power' Help the EU to Bridge Capability-Expectation Gap?", *European Political Economy Review* No.7, Summer 2007, pp.199-201

⁸⁷⁴ Benita Ferrero-Waldner, "European Neighbourhood Policy: The EU's Newest Foreign Policy Instrument", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 2006, pp.139-142, cited in Elsa Tulmets, "Can the Discourse on 'Soft Power' Help the EU to Bridge Capability-Expectation Gap?", *European Political Economy Review* No.7, Summer 2007, p.201

⁸⁷⁵ Narine Ghazaryan, "The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations", in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.223-241

⁸⁷⁶ Elsa Tulmets, "Can the Discourse on 'Soft Power' Help the EU to Bridge Capability-Expectation Gap?", *European Political Economy Review* No.7, Summer 2007, p.196

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid., p.195

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.195-226

deliver on its threats as well as its promises”.⁸⁷⁹ At that respect, the South Caucasus countries perceive both Russia and the US as powerful allies than the EU, and think these countries could have an impact over the events and have sufficient strategic interests in the region.⁸⁸⁰ According to Bruno Coppieters, the EU has a “subordinated role” compared to other actors and is perceived, by recognized and unrecognized governments, as having no decisive impact on the regional balance of power due to some weaknesses.⁸⁸¹ Nevertheless, the EU’s presence is not totally underestimated by the regional actors. The EU is perceived as “weak, but not irrelevant player” due to the fact that EU’s presence in the region could increase the South Caucasian states’ status in the eyes of their powerful neighbours and could provide them an opportunity to counterweight their positions against their secessionist entities.⁸⁸²

The inclusion of the three South Caucasus states into the ENP can be considered as the first step to satisfy the local expectations of these countries as well as the EU’s to secure its close neighbourhood.⁸⁸³ Afterwards, with the appointment of the EUSR to the South Caucasus, the EU aims to apply more pro-active and coordinated approach to the problems in the region, however, these developments have not provided an influential participation of the EU in the resolution process and not produce any viable outcome in the resolution of the conflicts.⁸⁸⁴

Although, the APs can be seen as a development in bilateral relations between the EU and the three South Caucasian states, the vagueness in the structure and uncertainties about the ultimate goal at the end of the process make the ENP’s success as a contested issue. Despite some common concerns that have been issued in the ENP APs and confirmed by the two sides, the expectations of the three Caucasus states and the EU differ from each other. Similarly, the three South Caucasian states’ expectations also differ from each others.

The effectiveness of the EU’s conflict intervention does not only depend on its own capabilities, “it is also subject to the dynamics of the actual conflict, in particular on the

⁸⁷⁹ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, “The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, *MIRICO Report Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.31

⁸⁸⁰ Bruno Coppieters, “EU Policy on the South Caucasus”, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 20 January 2004 <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/committees/afet/20040120/wider%20europe%20caucasus.pdf>, accessed on 05.08.2012

⁸⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸⁸² Ibid.

⁸⁸³ Narine Ghazaryan, “The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.229

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid., p.233

willingness and ability of local conflict parties to submit to, or resist, to external conflict management efforts”.⁸⁸⁵ The “absence of the regional cohesion” between the South Caucasus states also affects the EU’s stance towards the region.⁸⁸⁶ Brussels believes that the ENP APs will encourage regional cooperation which will provide a basis for a peaceful resolution of regional conflicts.⁸⁸⁷ However, three South Caucasus states’ interpretations and expectations differ from each other and from the EU. While the EU has mostly concerned with the security-related issues and focused on the economic links in its bilateral relations with partner countries, the expectations of the South Caucasian states’ are greater, and they are willing to integrate with the EU through membership.⁸⁸⁸

The success of the ENP is depended on the political will and the national context of the concerned countries as much as the EU’s eagerness and capacity to arrange further attractive mechanisms to evolve cooperation and reforms which will lead to the transformation of the partner countries. However, as Emma Stewart states “the EU’s influence over its neighbours is weak outside the enlargement context.”⁸⁸⁹ Moreover, there are still some questions whether the EU can effectively respond to these different expectations and demands under a common policy framework without getting caught another inconsistency problem in its foreign policy actions.⁸⁹⁰ The EU has been also very aware of this fragile situation that “the ENP is not perceived as equally attractive for all neighbouring countries and it is still uncertain whether or not it can respond to the very heterogeneous expectations of its neighbours.”⁸⁹¹

Among South Caucasus states, Georgia has been the most active and ambitious post-Soviet country which seeks closer ties and membership of Western institutions, mainly NATO

⁸⁸⁵ Claire Gordon, Annemarie Peen Rodt and Stefan Wolff, “The EU and the Global Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, *MIRICO Report Human and Minority Right in the Life Cycle Ethnic Conflicts*, 2008, p.8

⁸⁸⁶ Narine Ghazaryan, “The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.225

⁸⁸⁷ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU’s Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, p.15

⁸⁸⁸ Narine Ghazaryan, “The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.235

⁸⁸⁹ Emma J. Stewart, “The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?”, *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.17

<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

⁸⁹⁰ Elsa Tulmets, “Can the Discourse on ‘Soft Power’ Help the EU to Bridge Capability-Expectation Gap?”, *European Political Economy Review* No.7, Summer 2007, pp.195-226

⁸⁹¹ Interviews, DG Relex, 2006, cited in Elsa Tulmets, “Can the Discourse on ‘Soft Power’ Help the EU to Bridge Capability-Expectation Gap?”, *European Political Economy Review* No.7, Summer 2007, p.214

and the EU, and welcomes the Western involvement in the region.⁸⁹² Rose Revolution and post-revolutionary reformist efforts have created significant expectations for an increased EU's involvement in the conflict settlement process among Georgian politicians who are determined to end the status quo which is "no longer be acceptable" for Saakashvili government.⁸⁹³ However, the EU's policies concerning the secessionist conflicts in Georgia are not as much assertive as the Georgian government desired. The EU prefers an indirect and a long distant approach to the resolution of these conflicts by focusing on the democratic transformation of the country and has not directly confronted to Russia in the region

The existing tense relation with Russia has been further strained with Georgian attempts to welcome Western institutions into the historical "Russian sphere of influences". On the other hand, Armenia and Azerbaijan, even though they have also shared Western inspiration and integration, do not show the same enthusiasm in order not to draw the Russian's wrath, instead they follow pragmatic choices and prefer to wait the consequences of Georgian attempts to become a member of the Western institutions.⁸⁹⁴ As Ghia Nodia clarifies, if Georgia succeeds, Armenia and Azerbaijan will follow its path, and Russia is very aware of this fact.⁸⁹⁵ They anticipate that "loosing Georgia is, therefore, equivalent to loosing the whole of the region".⁸⁹⁶ In that sense, Russian's reactions to Georgia is stricter in order to hold it under its authority.

Georgia expects more from the EU to balance the Russia in the region. Georgia calls the EU to increase its direct political participation in the settlement process of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia with inclusion of more instruments from the ESDP toolbox.⁸⁹⁷ Georgia considers that the main reason why these conflicts cannot be solved is due to Russian meddling, so it believes that the EU can counterweight the Russian presence in the negotiations and provides a positive influence on Russia.⁸⁹⁸

⁸⁹² Ghia Nodia, "Understanding Politics of the South Caucasus: The Conflicting Paradigms", in Cengiz Çağla (ed.), *The Caucasian Challenge: Interests, Conflicts, Identities*, Foundation for Middle East and Balkan Studies (OBIV), Yıldız Teknik University Department of Political Science and International Relations, 2008, p.25

⁸⁹³ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.72-73

⁸⁹⁴ Ghia Nodia, "Understanding Politics of the South Caucasus: The Conflicting Paradigms", in Cengiz Çağla (ed.), *The Caucasian Challenge: Interests, Conflicts, Identities*, Foundation for Middle East and Balkan Studies (OBIV), Yıldız Teknik University Department of Political Science and International Relations, 2008, p.25

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid., p.25

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid., p.25

⁸⁹⁷ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, pp.9-10

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid., pp.9-10

Although Georgia saw the EU's presence in the region is for its benefits over the conflicts, Georgia-Russia war 2008 revealed the deficiencies in reality. As Narine Ghazaryan states:

“The Georgian conflict illustrated, in spite of four years of engagement through the ENP, the EU still did not have a sufficient presence in the region, and lacked dialogue with Russia on their common neighbours.”⁸⁹⁹

On the other hand, the EU's relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan are mainly built on energy and trade issues. Azerbaijan is the EU's “largest trade partner” in the region, whilst trade with Armenia is relatively on low level.⁹⁰⁰ In conflict resolution, the EU has not developed any special projects regarding Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and prefers to follow a “non-involvement policy”.⁹⁰¹

Armenia aims to break the isolation and sees the regional cooperation as a tool to get rid of the blockade, however, it does not consider the ENP as a way to settle the NK conflict. As a foreign ministry official clarifies, “the AP is a bilateral document; the resolution of the NK conflict involves other parties who are not part of its implementation.”⁹⁰² Armenia sees the EU as a trade partner who will increase its potential on trade and energy sector. They do not call for the EU's support on the NK issue, since this might endanger its position. Instead, it considers its relation with the EU mostly based on economic terms and sees their partnership as a way to erode the blockade which will indeed increase the level of trade. However, Armenian AP does not erode or facilitate to break the isolationist policies applied to Armenia from its neighbouring countries, instead focus on the development of an internal energy strategy due to the blockade.⁹⁰³

⁸⁹⁹ Narine Ghazaryan, “The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.235

⁹⁰⁰ Tracey C. German, “Visibly Invisible: EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus”, *European Security* Vol.16 No.3, pp.360-361

⁹⁰¹ Nicu Popescu, *EU Foreign Policy and Post-Soviet Conflicts: Stealth Intervention*, New York: Routledge, 2011, pp.95-115

⁹⁰² Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, p.15

⁹⁰³ Narine Ghazaryan, “The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.231

Azerbaijan is against to take part in enhanced regional cooperation and refuses to abolish the blockade applied against Armenia until a lasting solution is found.⁹⁰⁴ The contradictory discourses in the Azerbaijan and Armenian APs have also been considered as “double standard” by the Azeri officials when compared to the EU’s approach to Georgia and Moldova cases.⁹⁰⁵ The EU, therefore, has undermined its credibility in the Azeri government.

“Expressing its support for the OSCE process and resolutions of the UN Security Council in the Azerbaijan’s Action Plan, while stressing the right for the self determination in the Armenian Action Plan, EU limits her role in support for the OSCE process, promotion of democracy and people to people contacts as the most realistic scope of activities directed towards the resolution of this conflict.”⁹⁰⁶

Compared to Armenia, Azerbaijan seems to seek recognition as an independent actor, namely from Russia, and relies on its own natural resources.⁹⁰⁷ Similar to Armenia, Azerbaijan is not searching for further political support from the EU in NK issue. Azerbaijan aims to hold its trade power to counterweight Russia in the region and considers the EU as an actor who can build further economic links rather than political assistance to solve its territorial conflicts.

Other international actors’ presence in the region has also limited the EU’s greater involvement. The possible ENP APs success in the South Caucasus conflicts also depend the other international organizations and other regional actors’ policies towards these issues. As Stephan Wolff and Annemarie Rodt emphasize:

“The ENP prospect as a conflict management tool therefore depends on whether the EU is both able and willing to implement a conflict management policy despite other international actors engaged and potentially having conflicting interests in the country in question. Although the Union may have learned valuable lessons with regard to what means are necessary for successful EU conflict management, this does not by any means guarantee that the Union is able or indeed willing to undertake such

⁹⁰⁴ Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU’s Role, Europe Report No.173, International Crisis Group, 20 March 2006, p.15

⁹⁰⁵ Leila Alieva, “EU and the South Caucasus”, *Center for Applied Policy Research (C.A.P) Discussion Paper*, 2006, p. 12

⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12

⁹⁰⁷ Narine Ghazaryan, “The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.228

mission... especially where such efforts would conflict with the interest of other actors engaged or indeed those of the EU itself.”⁹⁰⁸

As they make clear, the willingness of the EU to engage the conflict resolution process more vigorously and with more clear commitments do not only depend its own capabilities, but also the external factors that have equally significant role in designing more comprehensive and assertive approach to the region.

As well as having the required capabilities, a strong and decisive leadership figure in the EU’s presidency is equally important to motivate the EU to take more concrete action and to apply these tools.⁹⁰⁹ In that sense, the EU’s “diplomatic discourse” can also be an effective tool to conduct its political support in conflict resolution process in the region.⁹¹⁰

Considering all these factors, we can conclude that the EU should define its strategy more clearly and in a well-planned way to use its tools and continue its search for further mechanisms to change the current situation towards a more constructive ground. As Emma Stewart indicates “the EU has a wide range of tools to contribute to the conflict resolution, and their measured application has the potential to make an important contribution... [and] a coordinated and cross-pillar approach is required if the EU is to make the best use of its assets.”⁹¹¹ In that respect, the EU’s willingness to engage further is as crucial as having and evolving its capabilities in order to initiate new mechanisms to support peaceful solutions.

Concluding Remarks

As discussed in detail in this chapter, the relatively increased EU’s presence in the region has faced some external and internal challenges. Throughout 2000’s, the EU’s

⁹⁰⁸ Stephan Wolff and Annemarie Peen Rodt, “Lessons From the Balkans: The ENP as a Possible Conflict Management Tool?”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.128-129

⁹⁰⁹ Narine Ghazaryan, “The ENP and The South Caucasus: Meeting the Expectations”, in Richard G. Whitman and Stephan Wolff (eds.), *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p.234

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., pp.234-235

⁹¹¹ Emma J. Stewart, “EU Conflict Management in the South Caucasus: A Preliminary Analysis”, The National Academy for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, Specialist Group Ethnopolitics, University of Nottingham, England, 22-23 November 2007, p. 11

activities has gained impetus along with the rise of its concerns and interests over the region; however the EU is still acting within a tentative and reluctant manner concerning in the region's conflicts. The EU's internal consistency, the different priorities of the Member States, the ambiguous institutional competences on the conflict related issues along with the external constraints, which are mainly deriving from the difficulties and complexities in the South Caucasian conflicts' nature and an overwhelmingly Russian presence in all the three conflicts, have seriously pull the EU back to the scene in the resolutions of these conflicts.

Although the appointment of the EUSR and the inclusion of the three South Caucasian states in the ENP framework can be considered as an improvement in the relations, and consequently, as being an important contributor to the resolutions of the conflicts with an increased economic support and humanitarian assistance, the EU is still far behind to fulfill the expectations. The different expectations and policies of the region's countries have forced the EU to develop a concrete strategy instead of applying reactive responses to the incidents. Therefore, the EU should develop both a comprehensive and also country specified strategy to encompass all the region dynamics and individual country profiles. Since the EU's visibility in the region has been limited, especially among the minorities, the EU should clarify itself and its intentions by developing more dialogue. The EU's soft power dimension in the conflict resolution process might bring positive outcomes, especially in terms of transforming the parties' thinkings, however, the EU should politically be more involved in the process and should avoid having lack of a precise definition and scope of its actions in terms of conflict resolution. Moreover, its economic support should also be complemented with political actions in order to achieve remarkable contributions as an international security provider in the eye of the other actors.

The EU has the potential to bring positive contributions to the ongoing processes of the peace efforts in the South Caucasus conflicts since it has a wide range of political and economic foreign policy tools, and has a relatively neutral stance towards the conflicts. The Russian presence in the existing negotiation formats creates doubts over the neutrality and effectiveness of the negotiations. Therefore, apart from the EU's cooperation with the UN and OSCE's efforts in the peace talks, the EU can provide a more neutral platform for the talks, and can enhance the confidence-building mechanisms among the conflicting parties. However, the ongoing problems inside of the EU's institutional structure such as the coordination problems between the Council appointed EUSR and the Commission initiated ENP framework, or the disagreements among the Member States over the Russian response to

any further EU involvement in the region, have brought serious setbacks to the EU's greater engagement in the conflicts. All these factors have hindered the EU's activities in the region and its conflicts, and have also constrained the EU's action as an international actor in security related issues. Nevertheless, the EU should strengthen its position in the region's affairs and get more involved in the resolution of the region's conflicts since the EU's future stability and security has highly affected by these violent actions around its vicinity.

CONCLUSION

The ethnic violent conflicts which surfaced after the Cold War have not only changed domestic relations, but also have had important external consequences in a more interdependent world structure. The transformation of the international system and the introduction and re-interpretation of the existing concepts, such as security or threats, have also had reflections on the EU's definition of its role in this post-Cold War structure. The possible spill-over effects of these unleashed violent ethnic conflicts around the EU have urged the Union to give greater attention to conflict resolution processes and mechanisms. Within this new world order, the EU has faced the duty of responding to the challenges and strengthening its international role as a security actor. Consequently, the EU wants a greater role and additional responsibility in the neighbouring countries to promote peace and security since this becomes a necessity for the Union's own security as well.

This thesis has shown that conflicts can stem from many diversified and ramified reasons. The complex nature of the deep rooted ethnic conflicts require a comprehensive analysis in which the causes of conflicts can be detected and then be eliminated in order to provide long-term peace conditions. Conflict resolution, which is generally used as a broader concept, deals with the core reasons of the conflicts. The EU's conflict resolution efforts are important not only to cease the violence in the region, but also to provide a suitable environment that can build sustainable peace upon mutual trust, cooperation and harmony of interests.

The ESS emphasized the importance of creating a ring of well governed countries around Europe to promote peace and security. The ENP was specifically created as a mechanism to achieve this aim and to offer an alternative to enlargement. The EU has also improved its tools to respond the external crises and conflicts, and taken important steps towards forming a coherent and consistent EU strategy by setting its priorities and commitments.⁹¹² Although the EU has been developing its military assets within the ESDP structure, the soft power of the Union has still played a crucial role in the EU's involvement in the conflicts around the Union.

⁹¹² Karen E. Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Policy Press, 2009, pp.175-180

In general, the EU's way of dealing with conflicts has focused on prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction through the use of short, long and medium term measures. The EU prefers to apply in contributing to peace through democratization, sustainable development and regional integration which indirectly affect the resolution of conflicts.

The EU has the potential to be more influential in conflict resolution, however it remains rather proactive and prefers to get involved in "vague confidence building initiatives" and its policies do not create "significant and measurable output".⁹¹³ Since the EU's internal stability, security and prosperity are closely linked to peace and stability in its close neighbourhood, the EU should undertake more concrete responsibilities in order to realize its commitments to promote peace around its neighbourhood and should not follow reactive policies towards the incidents in these regions.

The recent developments and increased awareness of the EU in its neighbourhood have obliged the EU to take greater responsibility and more concrete actions in the South Caucasian conflicts. As indicated in the ESS, the EU has faced new, intangible, less visible threats in the new world order, therefore, it should redefine its role in the international area in order to promote security and stability within and outside of its borders. The Southern Caucasus intractable conflicts have presented an important challenge for the EU's future stability and prosperity as well as its role as an international actor. Therefore, analyzing the level and the success of the EU's engagement in the South Caucasian conflicts in this study has provided a perspective to evaluate the EU's strength and willingness to become an international security actor within the framework of its historical and current developments and capabilities in the new world structure.

This thesis has argued that although the EU's security and energy interests in the region has been increased, the Union has a limited role to play in the South Caucasian conflicts, due mainly to its internal constraints (inter-institutional rivalries and inconsistencies in Member States' approaches) but also to the impact of other actors in the region, especially Russia. It has discussed in detail the EU's increased awareness on the importance of the South Caucasian region and the incremental rise in its security and economic interests in the Caspian region. It has looked into the three intractable conflicts in the region which have deep ethnic

⁹¹³ Emma J. Stewart, "The EU as an Actor in Conflict Resolution: Out of Its Depth?", *Plymouth International Studies Working Paper*, p.17
<http://www.politics.plymouth.ac.uk/PIP/ConflictResolution.pdf>, accessed on 16.08.2012

roots, historical hatred, mistrusts among the societies. The involvement of the EU in the South Caucasian conflict resolution processes is analyzed with a view to reflect on its contributions to regional security, stability and development and to assess the EU's image as an international security actor.

This thesis has portrayed that the EU's contribution to conflict resolution in the South Caucasian cases have revolved around the economic and technical assistance programmes and through strengthening democratic norms and values in the concerned countries in order to promote peace and security. The EU, as indicated in detail, prefers to contribute to peace by assisting the weak and incapable governments to transform their countries into more democratic and prosperous position for both sides can benefit. The EU has supported confidence-building mechanisms, economic rehabilitation assistance projects in the conflict zones, mainly in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and funded projects to improve living conditions of the internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁹¹⁴

The reaction of the EU after the 2008 war in Georgia also reflects the Union's approach to conflict resolution through multilateral mechanisms and comprehensive short, medium and long term engagement. The EU's assistance to the existing formats that the OSCE and the UN had initiated is also an important contribution that the EU provides. However, the EU has the potential to bring more to the ongoing processes. As Bruno Coppieters emphasizes, the EU has the potential and necessary tools to deploy serious numbers of economic and political resources in the mediation efforts, thus they should take the political responsibility in engaging directly to the mediation efforts in the South Caucasus conflicts and overcome the political difficulties, if they want to achieve optimal efficiency.⁹¹⁵

This thesis has found out that there are many internal and external challenges that the EU has to face in dealing with the problems in the South Caucasus. The ongoing internal problems of the EU in its CFSP – namely, the rivalries of the EU's institutions over their areas of competence, the deficiencies in the coordination of the foreign policy actions of the Commission and the Council and the lack of precise definition for the EU's standards in the resolution of conflicts – weaken the EU's ability and its strength to illustrate itself as a single, powerful international actor in the region's conflicts. The different attitudes among the Member States towards the level of the EU's involvement in the South Caucasian conflicts

⁹¹⁴ Laure Delcour, "The European Union, a Security Provider in the Eastern Neighbourhood?", *European Security*, Vol.19 No.4, December 2010, pp.539-540, and Nicu Popescu, "Europe's Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia", *CEPS Working Document No.260*, March 2007, pp.13-15

⁹¹⁵ Bruno Coppieters, *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies From the Periphery*, Academia Press, 2004, p.217

have also limited the EU's decisions and actions in the region. Moreover, the Member States' involvement in the region's conflicts through other international organizations or individually (through bilateral relations) has posed challenges for the EU. These challenges have also narrowed its area of maneuver; impeding or delaying the EU's actions in this regard, as in the case of Abkhazia.

The internal problems have posed serious setbacks for the success of the EU's efforts in the conflict zones. The two-headed policies in the conflict resolution efforts – as the EU Council appointed EUSR who has mandate to contribute to conflict resolutions in the South Caucasus countries while the European Commission participates the negotiations and implement projects – also diminishes the EU's effectiveness.⁹¹⁶ Not only the coordination and coherence problem, but also the lack of a coherent political strategy makes the EU's efforts superficial and inadequate to eradicate the root causes of the conflicts.

Apart from the coordination and inconsistency problems between the EU's institutions or the battle of competences over the foreign policy priorities, the EU is currently experiencing economic problems that affect its foreign policy preferences and the scope of its actions. The current Euro crisis has decreased the EU's financial resources for dealing with its neighbours, and has also a negative impact on the EU's soft power, making it less capable of projecting its model to the world.⁹¹⁷

On the other hand, the Russian factor in the region has also limited the EU in taking greater commitments in contributing to regional stability. The Russian sphere of interest in the post-Soviet territories poses a serious challenge for the EU's policy in that region. Russia is a powerful regional and international actor in the region's politics, as well as it affects the current conflicts in the South Caucasian countries. This is one of the major difficulties for the EU's engagement in the former Soviet republics because “acting with Russian approval is likely to be ethically (and politically) questionable, but acting against Russian wishes too dangerous.”⁹¹⁸

⁹¹⁶ Nicu Popescu, “Europe's Unrecognized Neighbours: The Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, *CEPS Working Document* No.260, March 2007, p.16

⁹¹⁷ Ulrike Guérot, “The Continentalist: Putting the EU Back into the European Neighbourhood”, *World Politics Review*, July 09, 2012
<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12140/the-continentalist-putting-the-eu-back-into-the-european-neighborhood>, accessed on 10.07.2012

⁹¹⁸ A.J.K. Bailes, “The EU and a Better World: What Role for the European Security and Defence Policy?”, *International Affairs*, Vol.84 No.1, 2008, p.124, cited in Rebecca Adler-Nissen, “The European Security and Defence Policy: From Distant Dream to Joint Action”, in Peter Dahl Thruelsen (ed.), *International Organisations: Their Role in Conflict Management*, Denmark: Royal Danish Defence College, October 2009, p.73

To conclude, it can be said that, in the South Caucasian cases, both the lack of membership prospect in the ENP, and the different expectations from the level of EU engagement in the conflict resolution processes have crucial effects on the success of the EU's actions and initiatives to promote peace in the region. The EU should overcome its internal problems and assume greater responsibility with clear commitments, along with a coherent, overall strategy by considering the South Caucasus region's internal dynamics, and then, should respond to the region's three intractable conflicts with the wide range of foreign policy tools at its disposal. This approach is necessary if the Union wants to be perceived as a powerful and capable international actor in world politics.

The EU, therefore, has to be more direct in its intentions and policies regarding all its capabilities and challenges. It should arrange its tools, civilian and military assets of conflict prevention and crisis management in order to contribute to the conflict resolution process. In addition to its technical and financial assistance programmes in the conflict zones, the EU has to initiate activities to detect the root causes of the conflicts, and help the parties to overcome their contested approaches since transformation in their perceptions would eventually lead to the resolution of the conflicts. The EU should do all of these with the recognition that there are also other actors (such as the UN, the CSCE, the US and Russia) involved in the region and should design its policies accordingly.

The EU must bear in mind that a settlement would not be valid unless Russia is a part of the solution. As examined in details in this thesis, the Russian influence and the presence over the region's politics and its conflicts cannot be underestimated while designing a valid strategy to deal with the South Caucasus. Therefore, the EU should enhance its capability to engage Russia in a long-term policy of conflict management.⁹¹⁹ The EU should also enhance its bilateral relations with Russia in this regard.

On the other hand, the perception of the recipient countries is an equally important factor in determining the efficiency of the EU action in its vicinity. The differentiated expectations of the recipient countries and the EU can create a crucial gap between what the EU has designed to do and what it has actually done. At that point, the EU should be clear on defining its commitments and avoid forming misperceptions coming from the ambiguous policy objectives. Because the credibility of the EU is another important dimension which directly affects the impact of the EU's actions in the conflict resolution processes, the EU has

⁹¹⁹ Bruno Coppieters, *Europeanization and Conflict Resolution: Case Studies From the Periphery*, Academia Press, 2004, p.217

to avoid applying incompatible policies or actions and has to clarify its intentions in the region.

Finally, it can be said that the EU's involvement in the South Caucasus is crucial despite its shortcomings. It should not be forgotten that the EU's constructive contributions to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in this region would not only assure the Union's security, but would also confirm and improve the EU's capabilities and strength as an international security actor.

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