



Cultures of Governance
and Conflict Resolution
in Europe and India




CORE Working Paper:

National and European cultures of governance in Georgia and Abkhaz
conflict resolution
(Report based on I and II round field work results)

By: Nona Mikhelidze

August 2012

	Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)	PO Box 9229 Grønland NO-0134 Oslo, Norway	T: +47 22 54 77 00 F: +47 22 54 77 01	www.projectcore.eu
---	---	--	--	--

National and European cultures of governance in Georgia and Abkhaz conflict resolution
(Report based on I and II round field work results)

By Nona Mikhelidze

The European Union's premise in its engagement with Georgia's territorial conflicts is an endorsement of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty and thus its non-recognition of the *de facto* independence of Abkhazia. Within this framework, the EU's governance initiatives in Georgia are focused on the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and development. In the EU's view, conflict resolution in Georgia will come about in the long-run if Georgia becomes more attractive for the separatist entities. Most of its assistance programmes have been carried out in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Eastern Partnership (EaP). The EU's Instrument for Stability (IfS) has tried to complement the ENP and EaP with direct conflict resolution governance initiatives, with projects such as 'Support to Mitigate the Consequences of the recent armed Conflict in Georgia', 'Support confidence building measures and de-conflicting after the armed conflict in Georgia in August 2008' and 'Support for Georgian efforts to overcome its political crises and to deepen its democratic reforms'.¹ However, whereas prior to the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia, the EU's governance initiatives were characterized by conditionality and were largely detached from conflict dynamics, since then the picture has changed: the promotion of democracy and the use of conditionality have been challenged by the Georgian-Abkhaz peace process.

Between the 2003 Rose Revolution and the August 2008 war, the Georgian government attached prime importance to hard power, i.e. to its military build-up, while casting (and covering) this through a broader peace-building rhetoric. Statebuilding reforms were concentrated on the reconstruction of infrastructure, city rehabilitation projects, the establishment of patrol police, the creation of free industrial zones, establishing a liberal tax policy, the privatization of state property, the introduction of a liberal labour code and a free trade regime with the neighbouring countries. The challenges to democracy, good governance, the rule of law, media freedom and the judiciary were neglected or tackled superficially. This form of governance was reflected in Georgia's approach to Abkhazia and its governance initiatives aimed at conflict resolution.

Bearing this context in mind, the study will explore the connection between governance and conflict resolution. It will analyse what are the modes of Georgian and EU governance in Georgia. Is governance shaped by conflict or does the culture of governance shape conflict resolution initiatives? How legitimate are state institutions and local practices of governance? Is governance used for conflict resolution or to pacify people? Are conflicts driven by bottom-up or top-down dynamics?

Georgian culture of governance: from state-building to direct governance initiatives in conflict resolution

Indirect governance initiatives in conflict resolution:

¹ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 2010 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability, Part I, European Commission, Commission Staff Working Paper Brussels, 16.8.2011 SEC(2011) 1000 final.

Statebuilding – struggle between security and democracy?

After the 2003 Rose Revolution, Georgia entered a new phase of political transition focused on the challenge of building a functioning and modern state free from corruption and criminality. In 2012 the result seems to be relatively impressive. However, the way it was achieved raised some doubts about Georgia's capability to construct a state with solid democratic values. Georgia, having no experience in statehood, has faced real challenges in reconciling state-building and democracy. The struggle between these two concepts was epitomized in the fight against organized crime and widespread corruption, when the authorities acted on the assumption that without autocratic methods it would be impossible to achieve success in this field.² However, anticorruption measures helped Georgia to develop its economy rapidly. The elimination of endemic corruption remains 'an impressive achievement among post-Soviet states. As a result, most ordinary Georgians no longer have to pay bribes when driving, to gain admission into university, to buy an apartment, or to acquire a passport'.³ Most of the financial resources raised in the fight against corruption have been invested in the reconstruction of infrastructure and activities to attract Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) such as mass privatization of state property and maximum deregulation. All these economic reforms were guided by a libertarian Georgian businessmen, Kakha Bendukidze under the slogan "we will sell everything, except our conscience". This economic governance policy bypassed certain social groups, however, as unemployment and poverty remained undefeated. Only in July 2012 the government decided to concentrate resources on social programmes (this decision coincides perfectly with the electoral campaign period). A State Ministry for Employment has been established and the government has started to invest in rural areas and health insurance for everyone.

Francois and Sud argue that 'states which fulfil the two core functions of security/territorial integrity and improvements in living standards possess performance legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens'.⁴ Furthermore, they claim that in many developing societies 'general living standards mean minimal social services to struggle for daily survival. The capacity to deliver on these core services is a mean to secure legitimacy'.⁵ In the case of Georgia, territorial integrity was not fulfilled, but there was no expectation among the population that the government would succeed in restoring it in short-run. On its way to state-building, the Georgian government has made the calculation (largely supported in the literature by Paris and others)⁶ that the first thing to address are human needs, physical safety of the population and socio-economic stability, and only after think about fair elections and good governance. Following the Rose Revolution, state-building efforts were aimed at achieving external rather than internal legitimacy and securing 'negative peace' or the absence of war. Later, by ensuring stability and minimal human needs, the government managed to gain internal legitimacy in the eyes of the population as well.

As argued by Ayoob, newly independent states, unlike West European ones, have had little time at their disposal for statebuilding. Such states fail to advance democracy and respect for

² Interview with the official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Georgia, Tbilisi, 11 October, 2011.

³ Waal de, T. (2011) *Georgia's Choices: Charting a Future in Uncertain Times*, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, Washington, Moscow, Beijing, Brussels.

⁴ Francois, M. and Sud, I. (2006) Promoting Stability and Development in Fragile and Failed States, *Development Policy Review* 24(2): 42-77.

⁵ Call, C. and Cousens, E. (2008) Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Responses to War-Torn Societies, *International Studies Perspectives* 9: 1-21.

⁶ Paris, R. (2004) *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*, Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge UP.

human rights not because they lack capabilities, but rather because of their fear of jeopardizing internal security and stability.⁷ Indeed another factor making state-building incompatible with democracy is the perception of the ruling elite (and of society) regarding the country's security and in particular the constant feeling of being in a 'no war no peace' situation and the accompanying fear of renewed military escalation with Russia that leads the government to concentrate all its political and financial resources in the security sector.

This top-down form of governance in turn contributed to the personalization of domestic politics and the centralization of power. Building political-social-economic institutions came with serious shortcomings in the rule of law, freedom of media, and the respect of private property, with an ensuing sense of injustice and frustration amongst the population. All this had negative effects on the peace process. Because of serious democratic shortcomings in Georgia, the Abkhaz did not consider Georgia as a state worth reintegrating into and where their rights would be respected.

Direct governance initiatives in conflict resolution

Over the years, the perceptions of Georgia and Abkhazia regarding the causes and actors involved in the conflict have determined all the agendas in the peace process. The conflict is multidimensional, including political, geopolitical, and ethno-political elements: Georgians believe that the Abkhaz are really Georgians and thus refuse the idea of interethnic incompatibility (the mixed Georgian-Abkhaz marriages before the 1992 war stands as evidence in favour of this interpretation). The Abkhaz instead consider themselves to be a different nation.⁸ Because of the lack of communication and ensuing misunderstandings between these two communities, Georgians failed to appreciate Abkhaz fears about losing their identity. The Abkhaz instead failed to understand the real importance that Abkhazia had for Georgian statehood.⁹ All this brought about a collision between the Georgian and Abkhaz national projects: Georgia seeing Abkhazia as an autonomous province of the country and Abkhazia seeking independence (or at the very least broad autonomy¹⁰).

Linked to the persisting Georgian denial of Abkhaz agency, the Georgian government recognizes only the political dimension of the conflict, considering it as part of the broader Georgian-Russian confrontation. Likewise nearly 59% of Georgian IDPs believe there is no conflict between the Abkhaz and Georgians, but rather between Georgia and Russia.¹¹ Around 60% declares that the conflict should be resolved by peaceful means and 85% are willing to return to Abkhazia in the case of its reintegration into the Georgian state.¹² Many believe that if Russia stopped fuelling the conflict, the latter could be resolved rapidly. The statement of then Russian president Medvedev, that the August 2008 war was the only way to stop NATO enlargement, strengthened these convictions.¹³ Another factor that contributes to this approach

⁷ Ayoob, M. (2001) State-making, State-breaking and State-failure, in A. Chester, F.O.H. Crocker and P. Aal (eds.) *Turbulent Peace: The Challenger of Managing International Conflict*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

⁸ Akaba, N. (2011) Perceptions of the nature, underlying causes and consequences of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict before August 2008, in N. Akaba and I. Khintba *Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm*.

⁹ Interview with the Georgian politician from the opposition party, Tbilisi, October 2012.

¹⁰ In the interviews in Abkhazia many declared they were ready to accept a federation/confederation based settlement.

¹¹ Displacement in Georgia: IDPs attitudes to conflict, return and justice: An Analysis of Survey Findings, Conciliation Resources, April 2011.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Medvedev: August War Stopped Georgia's NATO Membership, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 21 November, 2011.

is Russia's policy inside Abkhazia to exercise control over the local government's formation and policy making. Irakli Khintba, Deputy Foreign Minister of Abkhazia, admits that for outside observers the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia appears to be a department dealing exclusively with Abkhaz-Russian relations, given that the only actor the Abkhaz ministry has relations with is Russia.¹⁴ Nevertheless, reality is different and includes also an ethnopolitical dimension of the conflict. Indeed for the Abkhaz, the conflict with Georgia is a 'struggle of values and identity'.¹⁵

The August 2008 war caused a contextual change in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. 'The Abkhaz point of view considers the events of August 2008 and the recognition of Abkhazia's independence [as] a logical outcome of the incompatibility between the Georgian national project and the ethno-political aspirations of the Abkhaz'.¹⁶ Furthermore, the war changed the geopolitical situation, insofar as Russia re-affirmed that it is the only foreign actor to be reckoned with in its "near abroad". Indeed in Abkhaz opinion, the events of 2008 and the Russian recognition of the *de facto* states symbolized a 'Russian renaissance' in which Moscow could take important decisions without the backing of the international community.¹⁷

This reinforced Georgia's false belief that the conflict dynamic is determined only by Russia. Indeed the main governance initiatives of the Georgian government in conflict resolution since 2008 – State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation (2010) and the Action Plan for Engagement (6 July 2010) – reflect the false perceptions on the issue. In these initiatives, the Georgian government fell into a double fallacy: first it erroneously considered the Abkhaz as occupied and second it did not recognize Abkhazia as a part of the conflict (whereas the latter attaches great importance to being recognized as a full-fledged party). The strategy speaks only about Russian responsibility in the conflict and says nothing about Georgia's. Thus it seems that the document was designed for international actors more than for the Abkhaz people.

However, it should be pointed out that the international community has also started viewing the conflict through the Georgian-Russian prism. On July 9 2012, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly passed a resolution on Georgia declaring Abkhazia and South Ossetia as 'occupied territories' and urging Russia 'as well as the *de facto* authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to allow the European Union Monitoring Mission unimpeded access to the occupied territories'.¹⁸ The US Senate also passed unanimously a resolution affirming 'that it is the policy of the United States to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia and the inviolability of its borders, and to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as regions of Georgia occupied by the Russian Federation'.¹⁹

Furthermore the US welcomed and recognized the Georgian government's Status Neutral Document (i.e. an identification document available to residents of Abkhazia who do not possess a Georgian citizenship) introduced in the framework of the State Strategy on

¹⁴ Khintba, I. (2010) Consequences of the Withdrawal of the UN Mission and Prospects for International Presence in Abkhazia, in International Engagement in the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict Resolution Process, International Alert, May.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Khintba, I. (2011) The change in the context of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict after August 2008, in N. Akaba and I. Khintba Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Passes Resolution on Georgia, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 9 July 2012.

¹⁹ S.ReS. 175. 112th CONGRESS 1st Session, Calendar No. 113, July 27, 2011,

<http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2011/SenateResolution175.pdf>.

Occupied Territories. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that this initiative is ‘a strong step towards reconciliation’.²⁰ The document allows Abkhaz to travel abroad without having to accept Georgian citizenship. The holder of this document will be authorized to receive free healthcare services, secondary, vocational and higher education, including participation in exchange programmes and other benefits available to Georgian citizens. The document does not contain any Georgian state symbols. However it reports a country code – GEO – that makes the document unacceptable for the Abkhazs.²¹ The document has been recognized by Japan, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Latvia and Lithuania.²²

The State Strategy aims further at creating conditions to develop trade, including the creation of financial conditions to stimulate trade, establishing a donors’ fund for joint business projects, and drafting the necessary legal mechanisms to support business activity in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (e.g., the regulation of customs, taxation, and certification issues), creating special economic zones (e.g., in Gali and Ochamchire, as well as border areas).²³ In this regard, President Saakashvili has expressed the intention of building a completely new city, Lazika, on Georgia’s Black Sea coast close to Abkhazia. The Georgian parliament passed a constitutional amendment on a special (autonomous) status for Lazika. The city should become a ‘huge financial center [...] having an absolute safety and guarantee of commercial transactions for local and foreign investors’.²⁴ The law has yet to be drafted, however according to President Saakashvili ‘special status’ means that ‘there will be special form of governance, special jurisdiction for civil adjudication in order to make this place especially attractive for investments’.²⁵

All other goals of the State Strategy seem to be rather long-run measures and indeed none of them have been realized yet. Generally it is hard to investigate what kind of small-scale projects are ongoing in the framework of this strategy²⁶ as on 28 June 2012 the Georgian parliament passed a law according to which part of its governance initiatives regarding conflict resolution have become absolutely secret.²⁷

‘The law of Georgia “On Occupied Territories,” adopted on 23 October 2008, with amendments responding to recommendations of the Venice Commission in February 2010, defines the status of territories and places certain limitations on free migration, economic activities, real-estate transactions, and other activities in the occupied territories, and empowers the Government of Georgia to agree on implementation of those programs and projects in the occupied territories that meet humanitarian needs and promote confidence building’.²⁸ Thus all international organizations have to notify the State Ministry for Reintegration about any kind of activity they are going to carry out inside and regarding the conflict zones. However, according to officials as well as representatives of international

²⁰ Clinton Stresses Importance of Elections, Civil Georgia, 5 June, 2012.

²¹ Sokhumi Slams U.S. Decision over Tbilisi’s Neutral Travel Documents, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 7 June 2012.

²² Interview with state official in Tbilisi, May, 2012.

²³ Government of Georgia, *State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation*, (2010). See also: Government of Georgia, *Action Plan for Engagement*, (2010), http://www.government.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=225.

²⁴ English Law System Muddled for Planned New City Lazika, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 16 June 2012.

²⁵ ‘Special Status’ for Planned New City Lazika, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 9 May 2012.

²⁶ supposedly they are promoted by local NGOs, but the type of civil society organisations, their activities and goals are largely unknown.

²⁷ Okupirebul teritoriebtan dakavshirebuli samtavrobo proektis natili saidumlo chdeba (Part of the Government’s projects on Occupied Territories became secret), Civil Georgia, 28 June, 2012.

²⁸ Regulation of the Government of Georgia On Approval of Modalities for Engagement of Organizations Conducting Activities in the Occupied Territories of Georgia, Tbilisi October 2010.

organizations, local CSOs and EU diplomats in Georgia, most of the provisions have remained on paper. For instance, the coordinators of the COBERM project acknowledge that their notification to the State Ministry about planned projects is just a formality, as the government does not object to such projects.²⁹ Indeed according to the same source as well as state officials, none of the proposed projects (ca. 70) have been rejected.

As for economic activities, here again, according to a CSO representative in Georgia (who is engaged with peacebuilding initiatives as well), such activities are regulated *de jure* but not *de facto*. An example is the Inguri cross-bordering activities, where Abkhaz cross the border for commercial purposes in order to reach not only the Zugdidi market (the first large city in Georgia close to the Abkhaz border) but Tbilisi as well, that is ca. 380km distance from Inguri. According to the same source, the Georgian police is well informed about these movements of Abkhaz with illegal Georgian license numbers, but they tend not to stop Abkhaz handlers.³⁰ Thus, in the view of a Georgian official indirectly contributing to peacebuilding.³¹

Not officializing these economic relations is in the interest of the Abkhaz as well. All the Georgian governmental proposals on conflict resolution are premised on the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity as an end goal. That is why the Abkhaz prefer to opt for irregular (illegal) economic interaction. The trans-Inguri activities is clear evidence of this. Over the years, the goods and capital have continued to flow across the Inguri border. Also during the August 2008 war when the border was closed, Georgian capital continued to flow illegally into the Abkhaz market. Thus unregulated economy, including black markets and irregular border crossing, has become an indirect governance mechanism in conflict resolution and an opportunity for contact and reconciliation. However, this phenomenon also poses risks for formal conflict resolution in view the benefits the parties accrue via these activities³² (let alone the criminal dimension of these interactions).

The only official interaction between ordinary Abkhaz and Georgians, which has the potential of becoming a true be-communal initiative, is the management of Inguri hydro-electric station lying on the Abkhaz side of the Gali district in the village of Siberio. The plant is operated by 450 specialists, mainly Georgian citizens. The Georgian side guarantees full financing, rehabilitation and repair works (often by engaging foreign experts), etc. However, this cooperation has not remained purely Georgian-Abkhaz in nature, as in December 2008 Georgia decided to operate the Inguri hydro-power jointly with Russia. The Ministry of Energy of Georgia signed a memorandum with the Russian company 'Inter RAO ES' on the management of the Inguri hydro-power plant. It thus transformed once again an Abkhaz-Georgian issue into a Georgian-Russian one, delegitimizing the Abkhaz and demonstrating to the West that the Abkhaz have no voice even when it comes to dealing with a key issue such as hydro-power.³³ Russia on its side did not consult the Abkhaz at all.

Another indirect Georgian governance initiative in conflict resolution is the government's new policy towards the North Caucasus. As pointed out by Abkhaz CSO representative Natella Akaba, the Abkhaz have a special interest in remaining part of the North Caucasus and

²⁹ Interview with EU diplomat in Georgia, May, 2012.

³⁰ Interview with CSO representative in Georgia, Tbilisi, May 2012.

³¹ Interview with state official in Tbilisi, May 2012.

³² Cohen, J. (1999) Economic dimensions: The Georgia-Abkhazia peace process, Conciliation Resources, http://www.c-r.org/sites/www.c-r.org/files/Accord%2007_7Incentive%20or%20obstacle_1999_ENG.pdf.

³³ <http://bizzzone.info/2009/egy/1231793053.php>. Before this, the Abkhaz side was getting the power for free. Source: <http://www.openutilities.ru/cnews.asp?rbr1=7&rbr2=75&cmp=88032&Int=0&nws=24660>.

keeping their borders open with the region by developing cross-border cultural, human and economic contacts.³⁴ The Abkhaz have close cultural, linguistic and ethnic ties with the ethnic groups of the North Caucasus and especially with the Circassians. This may have motivated the Georgian parliament to recognize the 19th century deportations of the Circassians in the northwest Caucasus by the Russian Empire as a genocide.³⁵ Furthermore, in 2012 Georgia's State Strategy towards the Peoples of the North Caucasus aims at advancing people-to-people contact and cooperation in the fields of the economy, education, healthcare and human rights. Already in 2010, Georgian President Saakashvili underlined the importance of the 'United Caucasus' at the UN General Assembly by declaring: 'We might belong to different states and live on different sides of the mountains, but in terms of human and cultural space, there is no North and South Caucasus, there is one Caucasus... I strongly believe that a common market, shared interests and political and economic interdependence will one day give birth to a united Caucasus'. Even if this strategy is not developed yet and one could only speculate as to what the government has in mind, some reflections could be still made. One of the aims of this North Caucasus strategy could be the soft containment of Abkhazia by winning over the Circassians and others and using North Caucasians as possible mediators in the peace process.

EU governance in Georgia and conflicts

Indirect governance initiatives in conflict resolution

The European Union acts in Georgia through direct and indirect governance initiatives aimed at conflict resolution. Among the indirect mechanisms are the democracy promotion programmes carried out in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Eastern Partnership (EaP). As mentioned above, while the EU's democracy policy prior to the August war was based on conditionality, the Georgian-Russian war changed this approach. Conditionality seems to have vanished in EU-Georgia relations, overshadowed by behind the scenes politics.

On 15 May 2012 the EU drafted a progress report on the implementation of the EU-Georgia ENP Action Plan³⁶ summarizing the main developments in the democracy and peace-building processes. The document acknowledges that Georgia has fulfilled the principal recommendations for launching negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). Furthermore, the visa-dialogue between Georgia and the EU has been enhanced and further steps are expected towards visa liberalization. The report underlines Georgian achievements in the fight against corruption,³⁷ political and judicial reform, security sector reform as well as in ensuring freedom of religion and the respect for labour rights. However, it points out also shortcomings in the freedom of assembly and of the media, in the electoral system, and in terms of patronage and the centralization of power, where the ruling party still uses 'state resources for political purposes'. Weak checks and balances remain a challenge, as the executive tends to dominate parliament and the judiciary, making the independence of this latter rather questionable.

³⁴ Akaba, N. (2011) Introduction: Relevance, theoretical and practical value of the study, in N. Akaba and I. Khintba Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm.

³⁵ Georgia Adopts State Strategy on North Caucasus, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 30 June 2012.

³⁶ Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Georgia: Progress in 2011 and recommendations for action, JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Brussels, 15.5.2012 SWD (2012) 114 final.

³⁷ The document refers to the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index of December 2011 ranking Georgia 64th out of the 182 countries with a score of 4.1 of 10 (the highest in the Eastern Partnership states).

Regarding the conflicts, the report states that ‘the EU remained committed to and continued to fully support Georgia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty and the peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia’. In terms of actions, the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia has co-chaired the Geneva talks, and the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) has been active along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL). The EUMM’s lack of access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia however remains an essential challenge for the full implementation of the mandate. On Georgian governance in conflict resolution, the report is rather laconic, declaring only that Georgia ‘took important steps in implementing its strategy for engagement towards the breakaway territories’. The EU invites Georgia, however, to review the law on Occupied Territories and to enhance further the de-isolation policy towards the secessionist entities. The ‘Status Neutral Travel Documents’ are welcomed, but the acceptance of these ID documents should not be considered as a precondition to provide social services and travel possibilities to the Abkhaz. The document emphasizes Georgia’s constructive participation in the Geneva talks and invites Russia to make clear steps towards the non-use of force. The EU advises Georgia to implement further political, social and economical reforms, to make other steps in the protection of human rights, freedom of assembly and of the media. It also reminds the government that the special incentive arrangement for sustainable development – the GSP+ – within the EU Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is conditional on the country’s compliance with good governance criteria.³⁸

Following the Eastern Partnership Summit in Warsaw in September 2011, the EU drafted an Eastern Partnership Roadmap which includes both bilateral and multilateral dimensions and sets out policy guidelines for the eastern partners. The bilateral framework includes objectives such as (1) political association and economic integration; (2) enhanced mobility of citizens and (3) strengthened sectoral cooperation.³⁹ The document reaffirms that ‘progress towards deep and sustainable democracy is crucial in terms of future relations between the EU and its Eastern European partners’... “More for more” – ‘the more a partner country makes progress, the more support it will receive from the EU’. The additional funding (130 million EUR for 2012-13) is foreseen in the framework of a new programme – EaPIC (Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation).⁴⁰ EU Commissioner Stefan Füle declared that the “more for more” principle recognizes the government’s progress in reforms and good governance. In concrete terms, it will translate into an additional financial allocation of € 22 million for the year 2012.⁴¹ As for conflicts, the document underlines that the EU remains devoted to all existing formats aimed at stabilization in the region. More broadly, the EU considers that the EaP countries’ further integration with the EU will help to stabilize the region and advance conflict settlement efforts.⁴²

In contrast to this EU rhetoric, according to civil society representatives in Georgia, the EU in practice tends not to apply conditionality towards Georgia anymore. Notwithstanding the

³⁸ Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Georgia: Progress in 2011 and recommendations for action, op.cit.

³⁹ Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Brussels 15.5.2012. JOIN (2012) 13 final.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ The Eastern Partnership, Georgia and the European Union, Article by Commissioner Stefan Füle for the Georgian press, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/documents/news/20120710_01_en.pdf.

⁴² Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit, op.cit.

severe shortcomings in democracy building, the EU's statements about Georgian governance are rather modest. True, the newly drafted ENP Action Plan progress report acknowledges all the above mentioned shortcomings, but at the same time in the EaP document, the EU considers that the negotiations over an Association Agreements with Georgia should be advanced, if not finalized, by the autumn of 2013. During his official visit in Tbilisi in 2012, the European Council President Herman Van Rompuy declared that Georgia is one of the frontrunners in the Eastern Partnership and guaranteed the allocation of €22.⁴³ Also the visa liberalization dialogue with Georgia has been launched with an aim to examine all the relevant conditions for visa-free travel to the EU for Georgian citizens.⁴⁴

The EU's lenient position towards Georgia's failures in democracy development could have something to do with the EU's newly acquired role as a mediator between Georgia-Russia-Abkhazia in the framework of the Geneva talks. After the August war, Georgia's expectation vis-à-vis the European Union was that the latter would actively engage with and press the Kremlin on the fulfilment of the six-point agreement envisaging the withdrawal of Russian forces from the conflict zones to the position held before the hostilities began in 2008. According to an unnamed source, Georgia is not pressing the EU on this issue anymore, as they have reached a silent agreement according to which Georgia accepts that the EU cannot compromise its relations with Moscow for Georgia's sake and in turn the EU closes an eye to shortcomings in Georgian domestic politics, especially as regards democracy and the respect for human rights.⁴⁵

Direct governance initiatives in conflict resolution

Following the August 2008 war, the EU has established an unarmed civilian Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia with the main responsibilities to report on the grievances of the populations in the areas adjacent to the South Ossetian and Abkhazian Administrative Boundary Lines. The access to the territories under the control of the *de facto* authorities has so far been denied.⁴⁶ Beside this mechanism, the EU contributes to security in the region through its Special Representative to Georgia, who, together with the EU Delegation in Tbilisi, interacts with the Georgian State Ministry for Reintegration by providing policy advice regarding the Georgian 'State Strategy on the Occupied Territories: Engagement for Cooperation'.

Over the years, the EU has funded numerous projects designed for the conflict affected people and aimed at the improvement of their living conditions. Its activities have included the rehabilitation of damaged houses, schools and hospitals as well as the promotion of small-scale agricultural programmes. In the framework of the Instrument for Stability (IfS), the EU has also financed projects with local (Abkhaz) NGOs in order to strengthen local civil society, the rule of law, governance and human rights. The EU has supported dialogue between civil society actors across dividing lines by financing, inter alia, the projects of International Alert: (1) The South Caucasus Mediation & Dialogue Initiative for Reignited Peace Processes, which facilitated dialogue and research exchanges between CSO representatives; and (2) Strengthening the Capacity of the Peacebuilding Sector in the South Caucasus, which

⁴³ Van Rompuy hails Georgia's remarkable progress in reforms, EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, 5 July 2012, <http://www.enpi-info.eu>.

⁴⁴ EU, Georgia Launch Visa Liberalisation Talks, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 4 Jun. 2012, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24845>.

⁴⁵ Interview with state official in Georgia, Tbilisi, May 2012; Interview with CSO representative in Georgia, Tbilisi, May 2012.

⁴⁶ European Union Monitoring Mission EUMM, http://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm.

promoted inclusive policy making in the region by strengthening dialogue between non-state actors and decision-makers from different sides of the conflicts in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. These reports financed by the EU are valuable insofar as they provide a clear picture on the situation on the ground, but they have very limited impact on the peace process as such. Many are reasons for this: (1) the authors (from both Georgia and Abkhaz side) tend to be selected from the same narrow pool of experts, meaning that exchange takes place only between elite experts and academics; (2) they often fail to reach the grassroots in both communities. Actually these activities risk becoming part of the ‘peace industry’, in which the conflict and the peace process become a source of profit for the actors involved.

A far more important bi-communal activity is the EU’s new initiative – Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM) – which started after the Georgian-Russian war. COBERM envisages small-scale projects and seeks ‘to have a demonstrable impact on confidence building within and across conflict divided communities’. The initiative is administrated by UNDP in cooperation with the EU Delegation.⁴⁷

One of the ongoing projects, first funded under the Instrument for Stability and later under COBERM is “Engagement Through Dialogue: Dialogue and Study Visits for the Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian–Ossetian Conflicts.” The aim is to empower young Georgian and Abkhaz professionals, to facilitate dialogue between them and deepen their understanding of political processes across the conflict divide. The project contains a series of training sessions conducted in Georgia and in Abkhazia. Unlike many other projects carried out by international organizations, Dialogue Through Engagement foresees an ongoing rotation of participants, which enlarges the net of involved people and thus enhances the effectiveness of the project. The topics of the workshops regard issues in day-to-day political life and the perceptions of these processes by the different sides. The project also intends to build the capacities of young leaders to think about complex solutions to the challenges their societies face and to explore the possibilities and limits of trust-building processes.⁴⁸ The Abkhaz participants are young activists in local political life. Therefore, countering stereotypes and prejudice they have towards their Georgian counterparts is essential. Because of the sensitivity of this project, dissemination about its content and results is restricted. Especially after an incident in which a Georgian newspaper published an article about a successful Georgian and Abkhaz meeting, the Abkhaz threatened to leave the project.⁴⁹ A widespread idea among the Abkhaz is that engaging with Georgians means somehow being less patriotic.

Another project financed by COBERM in 2011 was “Researching the identity of the Abkhazians living in Ajaria” carried out by the Institute of Abkhazian Language and Culture of the Sokhumi State University (Tbilisi branch). The direct goal was to study the ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural identity of the Abkhaz living in Ajaria since the 19th century. The indirect aim was to build trust between Georgians and Abkhaz living in Abkhazia by demonstrating to them that Georgian academics and researchers care about Abkhazian identity issues. The Georgian Institute’s invitation to the Abkhaz to participate in the project was rejected by the latter. However, according to the project coordinator, the Abkhaz were pleased about this initiative and the publication of the research results (in Georgian, Abkhaz and Russian) were disseminated in Sokhumi as well.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Overview of EC Assistance to People Affected by Conflict in Georgia, European Union, Delegation to Georgia, May 2010.

⁴⁸ Interview with CSO representative in Georgia, Tbilisi, May 2012.

⁴⁹ Interview with CSO representative actively engaged with the project, Tbilisi, May 2012.

⁵⁰ Interview with Sokhumi State University (Tbilisi branch) Professor, Tbilisi, May 2012.

The COBERM project “Archives without border” has contributed further to Georgian-Abkhaz confidence building. During the 1992 war Abkhazian archives were burned in Sokhumi. In light of this, the project sought to scan and recover the data about Abkhazia stored in the Georgian State Archive and hand them over to the Abkhaz authorities.⁵¹

COBERM is therefore playing a valuable role in the conflict resolution process with 68 projects financed up until now. However, the lack of information about implemented projects remains a main challenge for the EU/UNDP: ordinary Abkhaz and Georgians are unaware about these initiatives. In general, it is hard to get information as UNDP representatives are reserved about these projects allegedly in view of their sensitivity.⁵² Yet an excessive emphasis on the sensitive nature of these projects sometimes hampers the implementation of certain projects. For instance, the Georgian government claims that, according to the EU, the peace process is too sensitive and therefore does not finance any projects foreseeing meetings between Abkhaz and Georgians in Georgia. According to a state official, the Ministry for Reintegration was planning to organize a summer camp of Georgian and Abkhaz children on the Black Sea coast (near Batumi) with COBERM funding. The initiative was initially rejected on the grounds that the Abkhaz would have never agreed to participate in a programme implemented on Georgian territory and therefore the summer camp had to be organized abroad. However, after pressures by the Georgian government, the initiative was realized within Georgia with partial COBERM funding.⁵³

According to the Georgian government, COBERM should fund projects which bring Abkhazians to Georgia, as only in this way can stereotypes and prejudices be effectively fought. According to the same source, in the framework of the State Strategy, some confidence building projects have already been carried out, such as the visit of Abkhaz teachers and medical scientists to Tbilisi to meet with their Georgian counterparts. This demonstrates that Abkhazians can participate in projects within Georgian territory.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The culture of governance characterized by a top-down managed democracy, a semi-militarized and securitized state, the creation of enemy images and the fear of renewed war, and the conflict resolution initiatives promoted by President Saakashvili all serve to perpetuate the power of political elites in Georgia. These practices foster a hybrid peace, which, however, is not “always desirable [...] as it may represent a combination of negative practices of the local and international governance initiatives. In some cases hybrid political regimes may combine (semi-) authoritarian rule and democracy”.⁵⁵ In the case of Georgia, international EU initiatives have accommodated local Georgian governance initiatives in support of the statebuilding process.⁵⁶ This, however, has had largely negative effects on the peace process, as Georgia has failed to demonstrate that it is an attractive country in which the Abkhaz community could reintegrate.

⁵¹ Interview with CSO representative in Georgia, Tbilisi, May 2012.

⁵² Interview with representative of UNDP in Georgia, Tbilisi, May 2012.

⁵³ Interview with state official in Tbilisi, May 2012; and Interview with representative of COBERM, May 2012.

⁵⁴ Interview with state official, Tbilisi, May 2012.

⁵⁵ D.2.1 Background report and work plan, Deliverable submitted May 2011(M5) in fulfilment of requirements of the FP7 project, Cultures of Governance and Conflict Resolution in Europe and India (CORE).

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

The Georgian government should completely redesign its governance approaches by choosing the right interlocutor – the de facto Abkhaz government and ordinary local people. Tbilisi should not hope for any compromise from the Russian side, nor should it have any expectations that the EU will engage Russia seriously on the Abkhaz question (on this Georgian authorities have become more realistic as of late). The August 2008 war was a clear demonstration that the West will not damage its relations with Russia for the sake of Georgia. Likewise, Abkhazia should abandon any hope for international involvement in Abkhazia. The post-war period and the evolving Georgia-EU and Georgia-US relations should signal to the Abkhazians that none of these actors will question their relations with Georgia for the sake of Abkhazia. The room for manoeuvre is rather narrow for both conflict parties. Therefore, what both should revise their strategies, abandon unrealistic demands and expectations, and adapt their policies accordingly. On its side, international governmental (and non) actors have to revise their strategy towards the conflicts. The EU should return to conditionality when tackling Georgian domestic issues, as Georgia is a developing democracy and should not be abandoned only to its own devices.

Nevertheless all domestic and international state/non state actors agree that managed democracy in Georgia is unsustainable, as Georgia and its government simply have no choice other than becoming fully democratic. This is because Georgia has no natural resources, its only resource is the political and economic support of the West. Consequently, it will be forced to undertake a successful transition to democracy. This said, democracy has not consolidated yet and the EU and Georgia have reached what Barnett and Zürcher call “compromised peacebuilding”,⁵⁷ where in order to ensure negative peace the two sides agree on a programme which reflects the external need for stability (for the EU) and the local desire (in Georgia) to ensure that reforms do not threaten the ruling elite’s power base.

Meanwhile, the widespread feeling among Georgians (especially the IDPs) is that of helplessness and the conviction that nothing can resolve the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Neither Georgians nor Abkhazians see the EU as a resource for conflict resolution. According to the Abkhaz, the EU never goes beyond statements of its readiness to assist the Georgian-Abkhaz negotiation process.⁵⁸ Ordinary people on both sides tend to have only a superficial view of EU policies and confidence building measures (including COBERM). Abkhaz civil society distrusts the EU. As pointed out by a CSO representative, the Abkhazians ‘need a process of confidence building with the EU itself, before [they] can talk about confidence building with Georgia’.⁵⁹ Locals suspect that the EU is merely an external player intent on competing with Russia. The same perception is widespread among Georgians. Neither the government nor the population believes that there is a margin for reconciliation between Abkhazians and Georgians, given the entrenched belief that the conflict dynamic is determined only by Russia. As the Georgian expert Ivlain Haindrava points out: in ‘Georgian consciousness [during the whole Soviet period as well as nowadays] it was Russian imperialism and that alone which was the source of all evil; Abkhaz problems were relegated to second place as a mere consequence of Russian imperial intrigues. This resulted in Georgians ignoring Abkhaz interests (which is an insult to the Abkhaz) and Abkhaz blaming

⁵⁷ Barnett, M. and Zürcher, Ch. (2008) *The Peacebuilder Contract*, in R. Paris and T. Sisk *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Post-war Peace Operation*, New York: Routledge.

⁵⁸ Khintba, I. (2011) *Main stages in the negotiation process (1993-2008): evolution of approaches and analysis of results*, in N. Akaba and I. Khintba *Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm*.

⁵⁹ *People’s Peacemaking Perspectives: The Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict*, Conciliation Resources, March 2012.

Georgians for everything (which is unfair to Georgians). The main risk is that Abkhazia will become neither Georgian nor Abkhaz, nor will it become their common country'.⁶⁰

References

Akaba, N. (2011) Introduction: Relevance, theoretical and practical value of the study, in N. Akaba and I. Khintba Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm.

Akaba, N. (2011) Perceptions of the nature, underlying causes and consequences of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict before August 2008, in N. Akaba and I. Khintba Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm.

Ayoob, M. (2001) State-making, State-breaking and State-failure, in A. Chester, F.O.H. Crocker and P. Aal (eds.) Turbulent Peace: The Challenger of Managing International Conflict. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Barnett, M. and Zurcher, Ch. (2008) The Peacebuilder Contract, in R. Paris and T. Sisk The Dilemma's of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Post-war Peace Operation, New York: Routledge.

Call, C. and Cousens, E. (2008) Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Responses to War-Torn Societies, International Studies Perspectives 9: 1-21.

Cohen, J. (1999) Economic dimensions: The Georgia-Abkhazia peace process, Conciliation Resources, http://www.c-r.org/sites/www.c-r.org/files/accord%2007_7incentive%20or%20obstacle_1999_ENG.pdf.

Georgia Adopts State Strategy on North Caucasus, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 30 June 2012.

Clinton Stresses Importance of Elections, Civil Georgia, 5 June, 2012.

D.2.1 Background report and work plan, Deliverable submitted May 2011(M5) in fulfilment of requirements of the FP7 project, Cultures of Governance and Conflict Resolution in Europe and India (CORE).

Displacement in Georgia: IDPs attitudes to conflict, return and justice: An Analysis of Survey Findings, Conciliation Resources, April 2011.

Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Brussels 15.5.2012. JOIN (2012) 13 final.

English Law System Mulled for Planned New City Lazika, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 16 June 2012.

⁶⁰ Haindrava, I. (2011) Perceptions of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict before August 2008, in A. Gegeshidze and I. Haindrava Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm.

EU, Georgia Launch Visa Liberalisation Talks, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 4 Jun. 2012, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24845>.

European Union Monitoring Mission EUMM, http://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm.

Francois, M. and Sud, I. (2006) Promoting Stability and Development in Fragile and Failed States, *Development Policy Review* 24(2): 42-77.

Government of Georgia, State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation, (2010).

Government of Georgia, Action Plan for Engagement, (2010), http://www.government.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=225.

Haindrava, I. (2011) Perceptions of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict before August 2008, in A. Gegeshidze and I. Haindrava Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm.

Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Georgia: Progress in 2011 and recommendations for action, JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Brussels, 15.5.2012 SWD (2012) 114 final.

Khintba, I. (2011) Main stages in the negotiation process (1993-2008): evolution of approaches and analysis of results, in N. Akaba and I. Khintba Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm.

Khintba, I. (2011) The change in the context of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict after August 2008, in N. Akaba and I. Khintba Transformation of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict: rethinking the paradigm.

Khintba, I. (2010) Consequences of the Withdrawal of the UN Mission and Prospects for International Presence in Abkhazia, in International Engagement in the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict Resolution Process, *International Alert*, May.

Medvedev: August War Stopped Georgia's NATO Membership, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 21 November, 2011.

Okupirebul teritoriebtan dakavshirebuli samtavrobo proektis natili saidumlo chdeba (Part of the Government's projects on Occupied Territories became secret), Civil Georgia, 28 June, 2012.

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Passes Resolution on Georgia, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 9 July 2012.

Overview of EC Assistance to People Affected by Conflict in Georgia, European Union, Delegation to Georgia, May 2010.

Paris, R. (2004) *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*, Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge UP.

People's Peacemaking Perspectives: The Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict, Conciliation Resources, March 2012.

Regulation of the Government of Georgia On Approval of Modalities for Engagement of Organizations Conducting Activities in the Occupied Territories of Georgia, Tbilisi October 2010.

Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 2010 Annual Report on the Instrument for Stability, Part I, European Commission, Commission Staff Working Paper Brussels, 16.8.2011 SEC(2011) 1000 final.

Sokhumi Slams U.S. Decision over Tbilisi's Neutral Travel Documents, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 7 June 2012.

'Special Status' for Planned New City Lazika, Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 9 May 2012.

S.ReS. 175. 112th CONGRESS 1st Session, Calendar No. 113, July 27, 2011, <http://www.civil.ge/files/files/2011/SenateResolution175.pdf>.

The Eastern Partnership, Georgia and the European Union, Article by Commissioner Stefan Füle for the Georgian press, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/documents/news/20120710_01_en.pdf.

Van Rompuy hails Georgia's remarkable progress in reforms, EU Neighbourhood Info Centre, 5 July 2012, <http://www.enpi-info.eu>.

Waal de, T. (2011) Georgia's Choices: Charting a Future in Uncertain Times, Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, Washington, Moscow, Beijing, Brussels.

<http://bizzone.info/2009/egy/1231793053.php>. Before this, the Abkhaz side was getting the power for free. Source: <http://www.openutilities.ru/cnews.asp?rbr1=7&rbr2=75&cmp=88032&Int=0&nws=24660>.