

## Conflict analysis of Georgia

Eva Miháliková

### *Abstrakt*

*Eskalácia konfliktu medzi Gruzínskom a Južným Osetskom v auguste 2008, ktorá prerástla do vojny medzi Gruzínskom a Ruskom, pritiahla pozornosť na kaukazskú republiku, ktorá sa s nevyriešenými etnopolitickými konfliktmi borí už od rozpadu Sovietskeho zväzu. Separatistické regióny Abcházsko a Južné Osetsko sa snažia o dosiahnutie nezávislosti od Gruzínska. Nevyriešené konflikty v regióne vedú k destabilizácii v regióne, čo má následky nielen pre región samotný, ale aj pre veľkých svetových hráčov, najmä vďaka regionálnemu bohatstvu zdrojov. Je preto nevyhnutné identifikovať príčiny a rozbušky konfliktov, hlavných aktérov a možno spôsoby riešenia, aby sa zabránilo ich ďalšej možnej eskalácii v budúcnosti.*

**KLúčové slová:** analýza konfliktu, Gruzínsko, Abcházsko, Južné Osetsko, konfliktné strany, dynamika konfliktu, riešenia konfliktov

### *Abstract*

*The escalation of the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia in August 2008 that led to a war between Georgia and Russia attracted the attention of the world. Caucasian republic has been struggling with unresolved conflicts since the dissolution of Soviet Union. Separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been trying to achieve independence from Georgia. Unresolved conflicts in the region are destabilizing the region. The region is of a strategic importance for the global players as well mainly due to its endowment with natural resources. Therefore, it is inevitable to identify the source of potential conflicts, its main parties and possible solutions to avoid future escalation.*

**Keywords:** conflict analysis, Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, conflict parties, conflict dynamics, conflict resolution

### INTRODUCTION

The need to conduct a conflict analysis of Georgia and conflict zones within the country lies in the fact, that the conflicts have been present in the country since the dissolution of the

Soviet Republic. Although they have been “frozen” for some time though, the escalation leading to violence such as the one in August 2008 poses a question, what are the reasons for this and how can we prevent such escalation in the future. The conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia is an “intrastate conflict with foreign involvement”<sup>1</sup>. That means that this conflict involves not only primary warring parties (Georgia and South Ossetia), but foreign government, or governments (since the US support for Georgia can be considered a secondary support for one of the warring parties). Russia supports the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and it claims that its main reason to join the war in August 2008 was the need to protect the inhabitants of South Ossetia. Most of them have Russian citizenship; they use Russian currency and speak Russian.

However, the rationale behind this is more complex. Russia is not only protecting its de facto citizens<sup>2</sup>, but trying to preserve its dominance in the region as well and undermining the efforts of Georgia to join NATO. On the other hand, Western countries (the US mainly) support Georgia not only because they are deeply interested in its territorial integrity, but because of its strategic location and importance. There is a need nowadays to diversify our energy sources and new pipeline Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan runs through the Georgian land.

Dov Lynch in his article “Separatist States and Post-Soviet Conflict”<sup>3</sup> describes the reasons for continuing existence of the de-facto states and divides the reason into external and internal. External reasons include the role of a metropolitan state, the Russian role and other sources: state, sub-state and supra-state actors. The metropolitan states play an important role. They sustain the status quo by not being attractive enough for the separatist republics to find a compromise. However, in the conflicts in Georgia, Russian role is crucial. Russia sees great importance in Georgia because it separates Russia from Armenia, Turkey and indirectly Iran. Second reason is Georgia being the route for the Caspian oil and gas. The situation in Georgia has as well impact on the domestic security of Russia.<sup>4</sup> It has confirmed

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<sup>1</sup> Intrastate conflict is a conflict between government and non-governmental party in one country, intrastate conflict with foreign involvement is a conflict between government and non – governmental party, where the government, its opponent or both receive support from other governments. These actively participate in the conflict. See Uppsala Conflict Database at [www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se) for definitions.

<sup>2</sup> The existence of „de facto“ citizens is a result of the „fait accompli“ policy of Russia, meaning de facto process of annexation of the given territories.

<sup>3</sup> Lynch, D. (2002): *Separatist States and Post-Soviet Conflict*. In: *International Affairs*, 78(4), pp. 831-848

<sup>4</sup> Eberhardt, A.(2007): *Armed conflict in Georgia: A Russian Factor* In: Eberhardt., A., Iwashta, A, eds.: *Security challenges in the post – soviet space. European and Asian perspectives*, Warsaw – Sapporo, 2007,

the fact, that force is used to both solve domestic problems and threaten enemies outside. Russia has failed to institute democratic reforms in the civil – military relationship.<sup>5</sup>

Further, as mentioned above, Georgia is trying to become a NATO member. Therefore, Russian politics in the region has been mainly pursuing the destabilization of Georgia in order to stop the progress in losing their influence in the country. The military presence of Russia in the conflict area was a tool of this destabilization. Russian support for the separatist regions had negative impact in the region.<sup>6</sup> The separatist areas as well depend on other sources for their existence. Kinship groups, for example are good source of support for the separatists. This support was important for people in Abkhazia as well as for people South Ossetia, when ethnically close groups in the North Caucasus showed support for them (e.g. North Ossetians). In case of Abkhazia, the diasporas play an important role in supporting de-facto Abkhaz republic. People that fled from Abkhazia in the mid-19th century because of the resistance towards tsarist conquest of Caucasus form Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey. The wars in the Caucasus have strengthened their national feelings. The diaspora is of a great importance for the region and for the de-facto government because of their interest and financial support to their homeland.<sup>7</sup>

Inside the breakaway regions, there are also reasons why they continue to exist as de-facto states. Dov Lynch<sup>8</sup> sees three internal drivers of the continuing existence of the de-facto states: absolute sovereignty, fear as a source and resource and subsistence syndromes. The first means that the separatist leaders insist on an absolute sovereignty claiming that recognition from the others does not create a state. This has an effect on the course and as well on the possible outcome of the existing conflict, since it makes it difficult to settle the conflict. The refugees and internally displaced persons have difficulties to come back home, because there is a tight link between ethnicity and land. Fear and the feeling of insecurity are problematic in many post–conflict countries. Search for security is often based on force solely. It is because of the legacy of the Soviet Union where “rule by law not of law”<sup>9</sup> was the foundation of politics. The de facto states may have institutionalized statehood; however, they are not able to provide for its substance. They are economically weak, there is a lot of

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<sup>5</sup> Blank, S. (2008): *Russia's War On Georgia: The Domestic Context*. In: *Perspective*, 18 (4).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Owen, E. (2009): *Abkhazia's diaspora: Dreaming of Home*, Eurasia Net, at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav030909b.shtml> (3. 9. 2009)

<sup>8</sup> Lynch, D. (2008): *Separatist States and Post–Soviet Conflicts*. In: *International Affairs*, 78 (4), pp. 831 – 848.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

criminalization and all these conditions make the “de facto” status sustainable. Profit is made for the groups inside and outside the de-facto states. Crime and illegal economy is obvious. We can link this crime to the metropolitan state. Its weakness means that unrecognized entities can benefit from this weakness. The status quo of frozen conflict is thus not plausible for the metropolitan state. It undermines its economy and political stability.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, as experienced in August 2008, unresolved conflicts are easy to re-escalate.

## HOW TO CONDUCT A CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND WHY

To prevent armed conflict and violence, conflict analysis is a tool to analyze causes and outcomes of conflicts in order to identify threats or serve as an example of good conflict resolution. Good conflict analysis is not only important to prevent other conflicts and wars, but to foster development in the volatile regions as well. When conducting a conflict analysis, we need to consider several things. First, we need to define a source of tensions between the two warring parties, and their incompatible positions. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program<sup>11</sup> distinguishes between the interstate and intrastate conflicts. While interstate wars are fought between states, intrastate conflicts are fought within states. They can be fought over territory or over government. They can as well be internationalized, which means foreign involvement. When identifying the sources of tensions and main incompatibility we must not forget to assess the political system in the country, level of economic development, respect for human rights, natural resources<sup>12</sup>. Second important aspect of the conflict analysis is definition of the actors or parties to the conflict. There are always primary parties – main warring parties that have a stated incompatibility. However, secondary parties in many conflicts play an important role. Secondary party is a party that shares an incompatibility with one of the parties and is supporting it militarily, economically or politically.<sup>13</sup> Diasporas for example play a significant role in many intrastate conflicts, such as Tamil Diaspora supporting the LTTE rebels in Sri Lanka. Third

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<sup>10</sup>Lynch, D. (2008): *Separatist States and Post –Soviet Conflicts*. In: *International Affairs*, 78 (4), pp. 831 – 848.

<sup>11</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University in Sweden. The database contains information about conflicts in the world, dates, identification of a key actors, incompatibilities, solution proposals etc. Can be found at [www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se)

<sup>12</sup> Melander, Erik; Mats Bengtsson; Patrick Kratt & Inger Buxton (2004): *Conflict-Sensitive Development Co-operation: How to Conduct a Conflict Analysis*. Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

<sup>13</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program codebook, [www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se).

important analysis is the analysis of conflict dynamics. That can be actions or events that serve as a trigger factor and thus lead to violent behavior and negative attitudes towards the “other” group or nation<sup>14</sup>. The last part is based on the base of the mechanism that are driving and fuelling the conflict. We discuss solution proposals to the given conflict, while taking into account its unique characteristics.

## GEORGIA AND ITS CONFLICTS

The region of South Caucasus, in which Georgia lies, is plagued by instability and conflict. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many ethno political conflicts emerged in the South Caucasus. Georgia has been facing the problem of the breakaway regions of South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Ajaria. However, Ajaria did not experience the unrest and major violence that plagued Abkhazia and South Ossetia<sup>15</sup>

Despite the fact, that the breakaway regions have the same destiny – independence from Georgia, there are many differences in between them. The differences are not only in the natural endowments of Abkhazia, but also in the fact, that South Ossetia did not experience the bloodshed that Abkhazia did in the 1990s. The conflict in South Ossetia in the 90s caused that the territory was divided into parts – one under control of Georgia, and the next under control of South Ossetian separatists. Therefore, the inhabitants of the region were forced to coexist together, the fact that never happened in Abkhazia. Abkhazia has always had a strong leadership that to a significant degree represents the interests of the ethnic Abkhazs . Although Abkhazia has its name after Abkhazs, the population was quite mixed. In 1989 according to the Soviet census there were only 17.8 per cent of the total population of 525,000 people ethnic Abkhazs, while Georgians were 45.7 per cent, Armenians 14.6 per cent, and Russians 14.3 per cent. The war caused large displacements, and largest group affected were Georgians.<sup>16</sup> Many people remain displaced. De facto authorities conducted a census in 2003, but its results are disputed. International Crisis Group

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<sup>14</sup> Melander, E. Et al. (2004): *Conflict-Sensitive Development Co-operation: How to Conduct a Conflict Analysis*. Stockholm: SIDA, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> BBC News: *Regions and Territories: Ajaria*, at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country\\_profiles/-3520322.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/-3520322.stm)

<sup>16</sup> Dale, C. (1997): *The Dynamics and Challenges of Ethnic Cleansing: The Georgia – Abkhazia Case*. In: *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 16 (3), pp. 76-108.

and UNDP Needs Assessment Mission produced some numbers, however, they slightly differ and their credibility is in question.<sup>17</sup>

In the recent years, many significant events in Georgia have had its effect on the conflicts. One of them was the “Rose revolution” in Georgia that changed a way of governance in the country.<sup>18</sup> The president Saakashvili promised to fight corruption and crime, and to restore country’s territorial integrity as well. The first success was re-integration of Ajaria back into Georgian rule. Mr. Abashidze that ruled over Ajaria for over a decade, resigned after he refused to recognize Mikhail Saakashvili as president of Georgia.<sup>19</sup> However, similar efforts to reintegrate South Ossetia were not successful, which again confirms differences in the given conflicts. To conduct a conflict analysis then we have to take into account these differences. Different conditions and causes of conflict may need adopting of different ways to resolve the conflict. There are three conflict zones in Georgia – Abkhazia, Ajaria, and South Ossetia.

The region of *Abkhazia* is a secessionist region in the western Georgia and its history with Georgia has been the one of many tensions. During the last century, Abkhazia held different statuses within Georgia and Soviet Union. After growing Georgian nationalism came with perestroika in the 1980s, all the minorities in the country saw it as a threat to them. Collapse of the Soviet system served to spread the instability and insecurity throughout the region. At the dusk of the Soviet Union Abkhazia opposed the efforts of Georgia to become independent and would rather establish a separate Soviet Republic of Abkhazia instead. In 1992, Abkhazia proclaimed independence. However, it was later rejected by Georgian authorities and they responded by sending troops into the capital of Abkhazia – Sukhumi. Georgian army captured the city and ceasefire attempts followed. Despite the attempts that tried to regulate the incompatibility, during 1993 the conflict escalated. UN team of observers sent into the country was a beginning of peacemaking efforts done by international community. By the end of 1993 the fighting stopped, however only partial solution to the incompatibility was found. Ever since then there have been tension between the two, and

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<sup>17</sup> Clogg, R. (2008): *The Politics of Identity in Post-Soviet Abkhazia: Managing Diversity and Unresolved Conflict*. In: Nationalities Papers, 36 (2), pp. 305-329.

<sup>18</sup> Cornell, S. E., Swanström, N. L. P., Tabyshalieva, A., Tcheishvili, G. (2005): *A strategic conflict analysis of the South Caucasus with a focus on Georgia*, prepared for SIDA (Swedish Cooperation Development Agency).

<sup>19</sup> BBC News: *Regions and Territories: Ajaria*, at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country\\_profiles/-3520322.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/-3520322.stm) (25.8. 2009).

when Georgian army launched an attack on South Ossetia in August 2008, Abkhazia backed up by Russia tried to regain control over the Kodori Valley, that was still controlled by Georgia. After signing the ceasefire in August 2008, Russia recognized the independent status of the two breakaway regions – South Ossetia and Georgia. Abkhaz elites claim their right to self – determination as a people. They say that they are indigenous population of Abkhazia and that they have suffered displacement and colonization for more than 150 years.<sup>20</sup> Abkhazia had a specific position in the times of USSR, when Abkhazs were minority in their own region.

Tensions with *South Ossetia* date back to the 1920s, when the region tried to declare its independence, however<sup>21</sup> ended up “only” as an autonomous region within the republic of Soviet Georgia after Red Army conquered them. Georgia’s claim for territorial integrity and the desire of Ossetians for self-determination were one of the root causes of the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia. The open phase of the conflict in South Ossetia lasted between 1990 and 1992 and approximately 1000 lives were lost. This conflict ended in July 1992, when the warring parties signed a ceasefire agreement.<sup>22</sup> This “Agreement on the Principles of the Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict between Georgia and Russia” produced a ceasefire and a Joint Control Commission (JCC), a quadrilateral body with Georgian, Russian, North and South Ossetian representatives, plus participation from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Each side (Georgian, Russian and Ossetian) contributed to this JCC with a peacekeeping battalion.<sup>23</sup>

There was no military confrontation for 12 years. In January 2004, the newly elected president Mikhail Saakashvili made restoration of territorial integrity of his country his top priority. He was hoping that a reformed country would be a more attractive option for the South Ossetians and Abkhazians to rejoin. His policies of anti - smuggling increased support for the de facto Ossetian leader, Eduard Kokoity, among the many South Ossetians, since many of them were dependent on illegal trade for economic survival. In July-August 2004 tensions escalated, dozens were killed, and the situation was close to full-scale war.

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<sup>20</sup> *Abkhazia today*, Europe Report N°176, International Crisis Group. At: <http://www.abkhazworld.com/articles/reports/43-abkhazia-today-europe-report-nd176.html> (15. 10. 2008)

<sup>21</sup> Cutler, Robert M.(2001): *Tskhinvali (South Ossetia), Georgia, Self – determination Conflict Profile*. In: *Foreign Policy In Focus*, pp.1 – 4.

<sup>22</sup> Popescu, N., (2006): „*Outsourcing “de facto Statehood”*”, CEPS Policy Brief 109, At: <http://www.ceps.be/book/outsourcing-de-facto-statehood-russia-and-secessionist-entities-georgia-and-moldova> (20. 7. 2006).

<sup>23</sup> *Georgia vs. South Ossetia conflict: Make haste slowly*, Europe Report No 183, International Crisis Group, at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4887> (7. 6. 2007).

In 2007, Georgia proposed changes to peace negotiations to replace OSCE-led Joint Control Commission and established provisional administration in Georgian-controlled areas of the conflict zone. Russia and South Ossetia never accepted these modifications and negotiations between sides remained suspended until early August 2008. Situation started to deteriorate significantly in conflict zone, when Georgians attacked Tskhinvali, which was followed by Russian counter-offensive.<sup>24</sup>

*Ajaria* is a mountainous region in Georgia, holding a status of autonomy within the republic of Georgia. The region is situated on the coast of the Black Sea. Its capital city, Batumi, is an important gateway for shipment of oil from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. It serves as well for shipment of goods into Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In 2004 when Mikhail Saakashvili was elected for a president, he had to face the first important challenge – the elites in the region of Ajaria declared a “state of emergency”, because of the forces trying to overthrow the regime in the region. Leader of Ajaria, Mr. Abashidze that led the region between 1991 and 2004 resigned after not recognizing the presidency of Mr. Saakashvili and blowing up bridges that connect Ajaria and Georgia. People living in the region of Ajaria are ethnic Georgians, and there is a significant Russian-speaking minority. During the Ottoman rule, Islam predominated, and therefore the word “Ajarian” means “Georgian Muslim”.<sup>25</sup>

Parties in the conflict are primary and secondary parties. Primary parties are those that have formed the stated incompatibility. Secondary party is a party that shows support to one of the warring parties (primary). This support can affect the conflict and its development in various ways – financial, military, and logistic. However, according to the Uppsala University Conflict Database and its codebook, the support showed to one of the primary parties not given specifically in terms of the given conflict that may unintentionally lead to strengthened position of the party is not secondary support.<sup>26</sup>

*Primary parties* in conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia are government of Georgia and leaders of the secessionist region Abkhazia. The leaders of Abkhazia want to exercise their right to self – determination. People of Abkhazia are ethnically different from

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<sup>24</sup> *Conflict history: Georgia*: International crisis group, at: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict\\_search&l=1&t=1&c\\_country=42](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?action=conflict_search&l=1&t=1&c_country=42) (August 2008)

<sup>25</sup> BBC online, *Regions and Territories: Ajaria*, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country\\_profiles/3520322.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/3520322.stm) (25. 8. 2009)

<sup>26</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, Codebooks and Definitions, see [www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se) for codes and definitions



Georgians.<sup>27</sup> They define themselves as „people“with a historical tradition, language and they considered themselves to be connected to the Abkhaz territory, self – identity and culture. This is also a support of their claims to self – determination as a „people“under UN Charter.<sup>28</sup> Georgia is represented by the president Mikhail Saakashvili that when elected promised to fight crime and corruption and as well to keep territorial integrity of Georgia.

Similar is the situation in the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia. President Mikhail Saakashvili, who is a close American ally and wants Georgia to become a NATO member, represents Georgian government. De facto separatist government represented by its leader Eduard Kokoity leads South Ossetia. The goal of the South Ossetian separatists is to either gain its independence. South - Ossetians see themselves being closer to the region and people of North Ossetia that lies in Russia than to Georgia or its people.

*Secondary parties* play a significant role, especially Russia. Its policies include political, economic, security and humanitarian dimensions, and are in general supportive of the secessionist forces.<sup>29</sup> Political support includes high-level political attention to the secessionist authorities. Another visible example of Russian support is the citizenship granted to the residents of unrecognized entities. We can say it is the tool to secure a legitimate right for Russia to claim to represent the interests of the secessionist entities, since they consist of Russian citizens. The importance of South Ossetia to Russia is strengthened as the region is close to Chechnya and as well due to the infamous Pankisi Gorge. Russia considers it the main training grounds for Chechen separatists.<sup>30</sup> Russian support for the secessionist regions increases asymmetry and thus decreases chances for conflict settlement.<sup>31</sup> Russia recognized the independence of all of both of the Georgian breakaway regions - Abkhazia and South Ossetia - in 2008.

US can be to some extent considered a secondary party as well. “The US has expressed full support for Georgia and has launched a military-humanitarian operation.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Reuters Factbox: *Georgia's breakaway region: Abkhazia*, at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLA46-9095> (10. 8. 2008)

<sup>28</sup> *Abkhazia today*, Europe Report N°176, At: <http://www.abkhazworld.com/articles/reports/43-abkhazia-today-europe-report-nd176-.html> (15. 10. 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Popescu, N.: „*Outsourcing “de facto Statehood”*”, CEPS Policy Brief 109, 2006, at: <http://www.ceps.be/book/outourcing-de-facto-statehood-russia-and-secessionist-entities-georgia-and-moldova> (20. 7. 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Kapitonenko, M.(2009): *Resolving post –Soviet „Frozen Conflicts“ : Is regional integration helpful?* In: *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 3 (1), pp. 37-44.

<sup>32</sup> BBC News: “*Press split over US support for Georgia*” at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7560644.stm> (14. 8. 2008).

The United States support Georgia mainly because its location close to Russia, and because of its strategic importance – Georgia has rich natural resources, that are extremely important nowadays, because the need to diversify energy sources is rising as well as the need to have transit routes for Caspian resources.

The *incompatibility* between the warring parties is over territory in case of Abkhazia as well as in the case of South Ossetia. Both break-away regions seek for independence and are recognized as independent republics by Russia, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Georgia considers the two regions “de iure” a part of the republic of Georgia. Although these are intrastate conflicts between Georgia and separatist authorities of Abkhazia and Georgia, the war in August 2008 internationalized the conflict because of the Russian direct involvement.

South Caucasus has quite an endowment of natural resources. However, these are not the only source of conflict in the region nowadays, although the natural resources and its transportation are one of the sources of conflict. The war in 2008 caused that Azerbaijan diverted its oil supplies to Russia and Iran and continued after the war as well. Azerbaijan’s unclear foreign policy may be a constraint for Europe’s direct access to Caspian resources.<sup>33</sup> Scholars (e.g. Theisen<sup>34</sup>, Ross<sup>35</sup>) state, resource wealth or resource scarcity may or may not be the reason or cause of the conflicts. The resource scarcity or wealth might be important factor in the onset or duration of the conflict, however there are more factors that cause conflicts, and as well those that make them last, such as underdevelopment of the country, poverty, weak state unable to provide security and stability to its citizens. Therefore, the *power relations* are very important in each conflict.

The war between Georgia and Abkhazia in the years 1992 – 1994 was mainly on the Abkhazian ground, therefore it left the area devastated, with destroyed infrastructure and its inhabitants „marked with vicious war of looting and plunder.“<sup>36</sup> There has been a lot of smuggling and paramilitaries and Abkhaz forces have been involved in this, as well as were

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<sup>33</sup> Mikhelidze, N.(2009): *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 (ENP) and beyond“, Rome.

<sup>34</sup> Theisen, O. M. (2008): *Blood and Soil? Resource Scarcity and Internal Armed Conflict Revisited*. In: *Journal of Peace Research*, 45 (6), pp. 801 - 818 – the author offers an analysis with conclusion that renewable resource scarcity does not necessarily lead to escalation of a violent conflict, even though it can create socio – economic grievances.

<sup>35</sup> Ross, M. L. (2004): *What do we know about natural resources and civil wars?* In: *Journal of peace Research*, 41 (3), pp.337 -356. The author analyses different resources and their influence on the onset and duration of the conflict, some of them – such as oil is linked to the onset of the conflict, but not its duration, while other natural resources such as gemstones, opium, coca or cannabis can prolong the existing conflict.

<sup>36</sup> Lynch, D. (2002): *Separatist states and post-Soviet conflicts*. In: *International Affairs*, 78 (4), pp.831-548

Russian peacekeeping troops. This is one of the reasons; why there is little will to come to conflict resolution on both sides.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, there was a lot of unrest and targeted attacks towards civilian. Many inhabitants (mostly Georgian ethnicity) had to flee from their homes and they were prevented to come back. This has had significant impact on the economy as well. This conflict stands out because in some cases whole villages were held hostage (Human Rights Watch: Georgia/Abkhazia: Violations of the laws of war and Russia's role in the conflict) Abkhazia has its own government that is operating daily, however, there are only very few services for the population. Foreign non – governmental organizations and international bodies such as the United Nations or Red Cross provide social security in the region. The „state“<sup>38</sup> is also very weak in having control over its own territory.

Economic issues are crucial for South Ossetia as well. Illegal trade across cease-fire lines is considerable, creating incentives for the preservation of the status quo. South Ossetia is a mountainous inland district. Its main asset is the Roki tunnel through the mountains linked to the Russian region of North Ossetia, which Georgian officials say they use for smuggling.<sup>39</sup> Georgia is an important transit country for oil and gas and the only significant route for taking Caspian oil to world markets that does not pass through Russia. Energy transit is an important contributor to Georgia's economy.<sup>40</sup>

**Conflict dynamics** - according to Uppsala Conflict Data Program database<sup>41</sup> the stated incompatibility over the territory of Abkhazia firstly led to violence in 1992. The war taking place between 1992 -1993 left around 8 000 dead, 18 000 wounded and 240 000 refugees. Some of the attacks towards civilians could be examples of one-sided violence. It was when the warring parties were fighting over the capital Sukhumi. Abkhaz rebels are said to be responsible for shooting down civilian passenger planes. The Confederation of Mountain Peoples<sup>42</sup> has supported Abkhazia in the conflict – volunteers fought on the

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<sup>37</sup>Cornell, S. E. et al. (2002): *The South Caucasus: Regional Overview and Conflict Assessment*, prepared for SIDA (Swedish Development and Cooperation Agency), Cornell Caspian Consulting.

<sup>38</sup> Abkhazia as well as South Ossetia are considered to be „de facto“ states, despite being recognized as independent by Russia and some other countries.

<sup>39</sup>*South Ossetia: Recent Developments*: Global Security, at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/south-ossetia-2.htm> (10. 8. 2008)

<sup>40</sup> *Russia versus Georgia*: The Fallout Europe Report N°195, International Crisis Group, at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5636> (22. 8. 2008).

<sup>41</sup> UCDP – Uppsala Conflict Data Program, see [www.ucdp.uu.se/database](http://www.ucdp.uu.se/database).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Abkhaz side-as well as Abkhaz authorities claimed to receive significant assistance from Abkhaz diaspora in the world.

This conflict is in many ways similar to the one between Azerbaijan and Nagorno – Karabakh. It is of a great symbolic value for Georgia, because it was humiliating defeat against a much smaller enemy. Ethnic cleansing was present and it created many internally displaced persons, however, there are also differences between the two. The conflict in Abkhazia has been marked by unrest returning to the region after the „major“ war. Georgian paramilitary forces (coming from internally displaced persons) have been carrying a low-intensity conflict on the borders of Abkhazia region, and more importantly, there was a brief return to war in 1998 that caused that Georgian civilians that had returned to their homes after the war, had to flee again.<sup>43</sup>

South Ossetia increased their calls for independence from Georgia, while increasing their dependence on Russia in political, economic and security assistance. Conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia has been taking many forms, from „frozen conflict“ to war. Georgian leadership since 2004 has tried hard to „unfreeze“ the conflict in aim to change the status quo established in the 1990s. Until 2008 the conflict in South Ossetia was less severe than the one in Abkhazia. Saakashvili tried to employ the same strategy with South Ossetia as he did with Ajaria (He managed to force the former leader of Ajaria Abashidze to leave the country) However, it was more difficult here, because of the ethnic card South Ossetians played with and the external support from Russia for the separatist regions.<sup>44</sup> The five-day war in August 2008 involved the indiscriminate attacks that resulted in civilian casualties mainly carried out by Russian and Georgian government forces. Militias and irregulars carried probable one – sided violence attacks in Georgian villages in South Ossetia and in the “buffer zones” between South Ossetia and Gori. Prevalent types of abuse were looting and arson, and there were records of unlawful killings, beatings and threats.<sup>45</sup>

Conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia first *escalated* in August 1992, when Georgian armed forces came into Gali region in Abkhazia. In 1992 – 1993, the Georgian government controlled much of Abkhazia, including its capital, Sukhumi. In the summer of

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<sup>43</sup> Cornell, S. E., Swanström, N. L. P., Tabyshalieva, A., Tcheishvili, G.(2005): *A strategic conflict analysis of the South Caucasus with a focus on Georgia*, prepared for SIDA (Swedish Cooperation Development Agency), Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Silk Road Studies Program.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Stepanova, E. (2008): *Trends in armed conflicts: one-sided violence against civilians*, SIPRI Yearbook 2009: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, Oxford University Press.

1993 Russia mediated a ceasefire that was then later broken by Abkhaz troops. They were fighting for eleven days until gaining control over the most of Abkhazia again, except the upper gorge of the Kodori River.<sup>46</sup>

In 2008 when tension grew in South Ossetia, other breakaway region in Georgia, Abkhazia bombed the Kodori gorge, since it was the only place remaining under the control of Georgia in the region of Abkhazia. However, before Abkhazian forces even came there, Georgian troops left and the ethnic Georgian population as well. According to Uppsala Conflict Data Program, the number of deaths was under 25 in 2008 in Abkhazia; thus it is not an active conflict.<sup>47</sup> The tensions in South Ossetia came in early August 2008, when, after nearly a week of clashes between Georgian troops and separatist forces, Georgia attacked South Ossetia. Russia said its citizens were under attack and its response was pouring thousands of troops into South Ossetia and launching bombing raids on Georgian targets. Violent escalation of the conflict, taking place in 2008 was the peak of a long – lasting destructive and provocative policy. Saakashvili leadership did not manage to find a constructive approach towards the unresolved conflicts. The Georgian government has used extremely nationalist rhetoric. The government also repeatedly violated ceasefire agreements. This escalation also involved Russian attack on Georgia, because of Georgians attacking the region of South Ossetia.

During the heavy fighting over the capital of Abkhazia Sukhumi, Abkhaz rebels shot down planes carrying civilian planes. The fighting resulted in thousands of refugees that had to flee their homes. Even with the presence of an UN observation mission (UNOMIG).<sup>48</sup> Abkhaz rebels were carrying on attacks on civilians, mostly ethnic Georgians, and there were examples of rape, torture and plundering.<sup>49</sup> All of these are examples of *one-sided violence* in the conflict. Moscow finds the actions of the Georgian government in South Ossetia genocide. Tbilisi is trying to claim that all it is doing is restoring its “constitutional order”. After the invasion of South Ossetia by Georgian troops on 8 August, there was a lot of human suffering. The great part of the city was destroyed.

The most important *external factor* in the Georgia - Abkhazia conflict, and as well in the Georgia - South Ossetia conflict is the declaration of the independence of Kosovo.

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<sup>46</sup> *Abkhazia today*, Europe Report N°176, At: <http://www.abkhazworld.com/articles/reports/43-abkhazia-today-europe-report-nd176-.html> (15. 8. 2008).

<sup>47</sup> See UCDP database – [www.ucdp.uu.se/database](http://www.ucdp.uu.se/database).

<sup>48</sup> UNOMIG – United Nations Observation Mission in Georgia.

<sup>49</sup> UCDP database - [www.ucdp.uu.se/database](http://www.ucdp.uu.se/database).

Kosovo declared independence on February 17, 2008 and soon the USA and most of the countries of the EU recognized it. The impact of Kosovo played quite notable role in the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia. Kosovo created an important political precedent of successful ethno-political self-determination. The Russian government opposed the independence of Kosovo. Even during the negotiations over the Kosovo independence, it was said to have an effect on the breakaway regions in Georgia. As BBC wrote on January, 24, 2009: „Moscow has warned that independence for Kosovo could have a domino effect on breakaway regions of the former Soviet Union.”<sup>50</sup> It was a very difficult situation to solve for Georgia as well, because on the one hand, if they had not recognized Kosovo independence, it could have irritated the US – Georgian patron. If they had recognized it, it could have accelerated separatist efforts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These breakaway regions saw the Kosovo independence as a development good for their own stalled independence efforts.<sup>51</sup> After the war in August 2008 Russia recognized the independence of the two break away regions in Georgia – Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

## CONFLICT IMPLICATIONS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Some effects of the August 2008 war are clear enough. Russia has recognized the independence of the two breakaway regions in Georgia and announced that it would keep 3000 troops within the borders of South Ossetia. Second, the war made the possibility of Georgia's membership in the EU and NATO less probable. After almost a year since the war began, Russia has not complied with its key aspects. Moscow vetoed an extension of a UN observer mission mandate in Georgia and Abkhazia, and the observers are leaving.<sup>52</sup> Russia as well vetoed the attempts to keep the OSCE mission to Georgia. Its mandates expired on June 30, 2009.<sup>53</sup> Georgia is hoping that the monitors of the EU will keep the peace in the region near sensitive borders with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The EUMM (European Union Monitoring Mission) that was originally set up to guarantee the six – point ceasefire

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<sup>50</sup> BBC Online: *Caucasus on alert over Kosovo*, at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7205622.stm> (24. 1. 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Lomsadze, G.: *Georgia: Treading Carefully on the Matter of Kosovo Independence*. In: *Eurasia Insight*, Eurasianet, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav022108a.shtml> (21. 2. 2008).

<sup>52</sup> BBC News: *UN Monitors to leave Georgia*, at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8150946.stm> (15. 7. 2009).

<sup>53</sup> Reuters: *Russia vetoes deal on OSCE Monitors in Georgia*, at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL3-00177> (13. 5. 2009).

plan, is now the only observer body in the country.<sup>54</sup> Main tasks of this mission are monitoring military and police in border areas and survey IDP's settlements.<sup>55</sup> Internally displaced persons (IDP), that used to live in the „buffer zones“, but with the lack of security they do not feel secure enough to come back to their homes.<sup>56</sup>

Russia describes itself as a “guarantor of regional stability”<sup>57</sup> However, the war in August 2008 had its implications for Russia as well. The decision to fight with Georgia caused immediate economic costs, and the recognition of the two breakaway regions may become a blunder in the long- term scale, since it can negatively influence the relationships between the federal government in Moscow and peripheries, especially North Caucasus, given its turbulent history and many previous attempts to gain independence.<sup>58</sup> The region of Caucasus has been gradually turning into instability and it does have a spillover effect to the neighboring countries. Violence emerged in Ingushetia, but not only Northern Caucasus experienced such movements. Clashes were present in Azerbaijani Gusari district in August 2008 between Dagestani insurgents and Azeri special forces. Sochi, the city hosting Winter Olympic Games in 2014 experienced seven explosions and one bomb attempt causing six dead and 20 injured between April and November 2008. If the situation will further deteriorate, separatist attempts may arise even in the federal republic in the North Caucasus.<sup>59</sup> Russia did not get much support either on the international arena. Support for the war itself was received from Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba and Belarus<sup>60</sup> Relationships between Russia and the West were particularly low after the August 2008 war. The war did not create any positive environment to foster cooperation and good relations between neighboring countries at all.<sup>61</sup>

The war in August 2008 revealed some facts about the Euro – Atlantic political space and the Caucasus itself. It highlighted the conflicting interests of key global actors and showed the limits of Western policies in the zone considered by Russia to be its sphere of

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<sup>54</sup> Corso, M.: *Georgia: European Monitors in Georgia – A Case of Great Expectations?* Eurasia Insight, at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav070609a.shtml> (7. 6. 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> International Crisis Group (2009): *Georgia-Russia: Still Insecure and Dangerous*, Policy Briefing No. 53 At: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6171&l=1> (22. 6. 2009).

<sup>57</sup> Financial Times: *Lavrov: “Why Russia’s response to Georgia was right”* at: <http://www.ft.com/home/-europe> (12. 8. 2008).

<sup>58</sup> Secrieru, S.(2009): *Illusion of power: Russia after the South Caucasus Battle*, CEPS Working Document No. 311, at: <http://www.ceps.be/book/illusion-power-russia-after-south-caucasus-battle> (24. 2. 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> The expression of support from Belarus was delayed, which was embarrassing for Russia.

<sup>61</sup> Secrieru, S.(2009): *Illusion of power: Russia after the South Caucasus Battle*, CEPS Working Document No. 311.

influence. The crisis showed that if the US and the EU want to play a significant role in the Caucasus, they both must redefine their policies not only towards Caucasus, but as well towards Russia.<sup>62</sup>

Caucasus – Caspian region has been facing a new geopolitical reality since the war in August 2008. Former Soviet republics did not back Russian actions, and did not as well recognize the independence of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia breakaway regions. The August war highlighted the fragility of the Black Sea region and GUAM failed to protect one of its members. The Ukraine was the only one in the region that rejected Russian military action. August war destabilized also the situation in the North Caucasus. Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia might create a dangerous precedent in the region.<sup>63</sup>

*Third parties* were involved in the conflicts in Georgia mostly through UNOMIG - the United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia. This body was established in 1993 to observe the compliance of the ceasefire agreement between Georgian government and the Abkhaz authorities. Its mandate, extended until 13 June 2009. Its main roles are to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire, to observe the operation of the peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), to cooperate with the parties of conflict and with CIS peacekeeping forces etc.

The Russian Federation as well played its role in multilateral forums under the aegis of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The OSCE provides political guidance to the Joint Control Commission (JCC), created by the 1994 agreement. The JCC's original charge was to oversee the trilateral (Georgian-Russian-South Ossetian) peacekeeping force.<sup>64</sup> However, the mandate of JPKF (Joint Peacekeeping Forces) ended in 2009, because the consensus on the role of the mission was not reached.<sup>65</sup>

The EU has been playing a role of a facilitator as well. The French President Nicholas Sarkozy mediated a ceasefire between warring parties on behalf of the EU. The role of the

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<sup>62</sup> Mikhelidze, N.(2009): *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 (ENP) and beyond“, Rome, 6-7 February 2009, At: <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai0901.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> Mikhelidze, N.(2009): *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 (ENP) and beyond“, Rome, 6 – 7 February 2009. At: <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai0901.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Cutler, Robert M. (2001): *Tskhinvali (South Ossetia), Georgia, Self – determination Conflict Profile*. In: *Foreign Policy In Focus*, pp.1- 4.

<sup>65</sup>Uppsala Conflict Data Program, [www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se).



EU in this region is however greater. It maintains a relationship with countries in the region through European Neighborhood Policy, a framework providing “broad and intensive interaction on large part of European acquis.”<sup>66</sup> This region has a great importance for the EU for more reasons – first, the last enlargement moved the borders to the Black Sea region, which means greater interest of the Union for the greater area of the Black Sea, in which South Caucasus belongs. Second is the need to diversify the sources of energy and routes for supply of these resources. The six-point peace plan obliged the parties not to use force to resolve the conflict, to stop immediately all the military action, to enable free access for humanitarian aid as well as for Georgian troops to return to their positions held prior the start of the military operation. For Russian troops as well as return to the prior positions and a start of an international discussion about the future status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.<sup>67</sup> The EU has as well deployed staff that has had 300 members and their main task was to monitor the process of stabilization process, the return of the internally displaced persons and the reduction of tension between the actors.<sup>68</sup> European Union helped to mediate the solution proposal leading to the signature of a peace plan, although the realization of the provision stated in the plan is problematic. The plan ordered Russian troops to withdraw from the Georgian territory, which de iure includes Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia considers these two being independent countries. The most problematic issue is the question of Kosovo, in which even the EU does not have a single view. The situation in Kosovo has had a significant impact on the Caucasus.

Caucasus is a challenge for the EU. Sovereign, good governed states can also be an instrument for the economic development, free market and stability of the whole region. The economy plays an important role. The need to diversify the energy sources and secure their stability leads to the question of building a corridor of transportation between the East and West. Its first milestone is the building of the Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan pipeline.<sup>69</sup> The recent gas crisis showed the weaknesses of Europe and need not to depend on Russia as the only source of energy for Europe.

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<sup>66</sup> Nuriyev, E.(2007): *EU Policy in the South Caucasus: View from Azerbaijan*, CEPS Working Document No. 272, at:<http://www.ceps.eu/node/1348>, (2. 7. 2007).

<sup>67</sup> Bremner, Ch.: *Full text of the Georgia peace plan and obstacles to its implementation*, Times Online At: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4522496.ece> (13.8. 2008).

<sup>68</sup> See Uppsala Conflict Data Program database, [www.ucdp.uu.se/database](http://www.ucdp.uu.se/database).

<sup>69</sup> Cornell, S. E., Starr, F. S.(2006): *Caucasus: A challenge for Europe*, CACI & SRSP Silk Road Paper.

When it comes to security issues, America and Europe share the same interests in the region and its security. However, the EU is the most interested in the security of the Caucasus because of its proximity. Bulgaria and Romania now being the member states of the EU make EU a Black sea power, and if Turkey was accepted, the South Caucasus region would become the direct neighbor of the EU.<sup>70</sup>

The conflict management process in Georgia involves many actors. In Abkhazia, so called “Geneva process” led by the UN was launched and it including security, economic cooperation and return of refugees and internally displaced persons. UN and OSCE agreed to set up a joint human rights office. In South Ossetia, Joint Control Commission (JCC) was set up, to control and direct Joint Peacekeeping Forces consisting of Russian North and South Ossetians, and Georgians. However, in the first half of 2008, when the situation in the region started to worsen, Georgia and South Ossetia did not attend any talks, because they could not agree on the framework. After the war in August 2008, Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia signed the six – point peace plan mediated by the French president Nicholas Sarkozy. The first round of talks in October 2008 was not successful, since there were issues concerning the presence of the authorities from South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia recognized them as independent state, though they were still considered a part of Georgian territory by Georgia. The peace talks have been ongoing; however, the actors are accusing each other. In March 2009, Georgia accused Russia of undermining the peace talks and thus blocking the further conflict prevention in the region. “Shootings, kidnappings and other incidents have continued in and around South Ossetia and Abkhazia since last year's war between Russia and Georgia.”<sup>71</sup> Are these negotiations and peace talks resolving the incompatibility or are they just regulating it? I would say it is only a regulation of the incompatibility, because of the given circumstances. “Frozen” conflicts in the Caucasus are despite many attempts to find a solution far from being resolved. Many were hoping that regional cooperation and integration would help.

When we go back to the sources of tension between the warring parties, it is a combination of separatism and fighting over the control of the natural resources in the country and weak state unable to secure stability to its citizens. Security dilemma is present

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> EU Business: *Russia undermining Geneva peace talks: Georgia*, at: [http://georgiandaily.com/-index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=10253&Itemid=1&lang=ka](http://georgiandaily.com/-index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=10253&Itemid=1&lang=ka) (2. 3. 2009) .

in the conflict in the post – Soviet space.<sup>72</sup> The transition of these countries from totalitarianism to democracy after the dissolution of the Soviet system along with the weak state created the security dilemma in which the ethnic minorities were engaged. The strategy that promoted the improvement of democratic institutions, protection of the rights of minorities failed. On the other hand, regional integration would be the good solution for the “frozen” conflict in the Caucasus. Regional integration can be beneficial economically as well as politically.<sup>73</sup>

There are a few examples of regional cooperation in the Caucasus region. One of them is the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation. It consists of 12 countries and its main object is to foster economic cooperation in the Black Sea region. The activities of OBSEC are though very specific, therefore they would not provide good basis to stabilize frozen conflicts in the Caucasus. Second example is GUAM (Organization for Democracy and Economic Development), a framework established to solve the problems of regional security in the Black Sea/Caspian region. Between the highest priorities of GUAM are “energy security issues, development of Caspian gas/oil routes and securing diverse energy supply routes to Europe”<sup>74</sup> GUAM as such is working in the area of security – war against organized crime, “frozen” conflicts etc. Although GUAM is not based on economic cooperation, Russian counteractions and open support for separatist leaderships make it difficult for the conflict in the region to settle. As a response to new security dilemmas created by the war in Georgia in summer 2008, Turkey came up with the new regional security framework that would address issues raised by the conflict. Greater integration between Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia would be encouraged and the platform would as well empower Russia and Turkey to be the regional guarantors of security.<sup>75</sup> Although Armenia has been enthusiastic about this initiative, Baku was rather skeptic, because of the fear that it would be a pretext for opening the borders between Armenia and Turkey.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kapitonenko, M. (2009): *Resolving post –Soviet „Frozen Conflicts“ : Is regional integration helpful?* In: *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 3 (1), pp. 37 – 44.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Kapitonenko, M. (2009): *Resolving post –Soviet „Frozen Conflicts“ : Is regional integration helpful?* In: *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, 3 (1), pp. 37 - 44, p. 41

<sup>75</sup> Ismail, A. M. (2008) : *Responding to Georgia crisis, Turkey seeks new Caucasus security initiative*. In: *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 5 (161).

<sup>76</sup> Mikhelidze, N.(2009): *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

Many international and other external actors have been involved in the conflict as well, because of the strategic and economic importance of the region. Since the region of the South Caucasus is part of the European Neighborhood Policy, EU has been involved greatly as well. Moreover, Georgia has shown an interest to integrate into the EU and NATO, helped Europe to diversify its energy sources by building the pipeline Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan, and sent troops to Kosovo and Afghanistan. Therefore, weakened Georgia would mean less strong partner in the South Caucasus. Not only regional, but as well national integration and cooperation is important to prevent further conflicts in Georgia. Georgia has been trying to make a progress in state – building since the Rose revolution. Except economic development, it included the idea of renewing the state authority over the territory of Georgia. Conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain unresolved, but there are other minorities in Georgia as well, that do not have autonomous status. Armenians and Azeris in Georgia never rebelled against the central government; however, their relations with the state are damaged by the wrong policy towards them. Regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the Russian support for them, especially the fact, that Russia recognized the independence of both of them, is suggesting, that these conflict are part of broader framework, therefore they need to be solved in broader network. Thus, conflicts have had effects on the relationship between the ethnic majority and minorities living in the country.<sup>77</sup>

As noted earlier, the source of conflict is never a single reason, or fact. It is a mixture of various reasons, such as resource wealth or scarcity, strategic importance of the given region, weak state, underdevelopment, poverty, ethnic and religious tensions, etc. Conflicts in Georgia possess more of these features. It is an important region not only because of its location between the East and West, but mainly due to its resource endowment. The West nowadays feels the need to diversify its energy resources. On the other hand, there is Russia that does not want to lose control over its former territories.

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Caucasus and Black Sea region: European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and beyond., Rome, 6 – 7 February 2009. At: <http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai0901.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> Niklas, N., Popjanevski, J. (2009).: *State Building Dilemmas: The Process of National Integration in Post Revolutionary Georgia* In: Metreveli, E. Nilsson, N., Popjanevski, J., Yakobashvili, T.: *State approaches to National Integration in Georgia ,Two perspectives, Silk Road Paper*

## CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to conduct a conflict analysis of Georgia. “Frozen” conflicts in the Caucasus region destabilize the region and there is a risk of re-escalation as happened in summer 2008 in the conflict between Georgia and South Ossetia. Therefore effective conflict management process must be employed to stabilize the region and bring peace and security to its citizens.

Ethnically diverse and mixed, Georgia and the whole region need conflict-sensitive approach. The countries themselves and international community as well should engage in the dialogue aimed at conflict settlement and providing security to all the citizens regardless of their ethnicity or religion. The return of the internally displaced persons to their homes must be secured. Georgia should try to foster economic development together with promotion of democracy and respect for human rights.

Georgia, as the report of Crisis Group says is “still insecure and dangerous.”<sup>78</sup> The UN mission and the OSCE mission are closed and the only observer body present in Georgia is EUMM – European Union Monitoring Mission. Steps recommended in 2008 after the war in Georgia by Crisis Group to take are still valid today.

Georgia as well as South Ossetia and Abkhazia should prevent human rights violation and allow the internally displaced person to participate in political and social life. Georgia and de-facto republics as well should welcome and support foreign programs aimed at development of the region.<sup>79</sup> The role of the international actors, such as the EU, the US and OSCE is to insist on investigation of the 2008 war and violations it produced. Further, they should participate in efforts to solve immediate security and humanitarian problems. The EU within the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) should further expand cooperation and dialogue with its neighbors and insist on fulfillment of the measures set in the ENP Action Plans.

Therefore to settle the conflicts and prevent conflicts in the future, the engagement is needed both from within the conflict region themselves and from the outside as well. Georgia, and the region of Caucasus as a whole, needs to provide stability and security to its

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<sup>78</sup> International Crisis Group: *Georgia-Russia: Still Insecure and Dangerous*, Europe Briefing No. 53  
At: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6171&l=1> (22.6. 2009).

<sup>79</sup> International Crisis Group: *Still Insecure and Dangerous*, Europe Briefing No. 53. At:  
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6171&l=1> (22.6. 2009).

citizens. If the states in the region are strong and stable, they can profit from the resources and possibilities they offer.

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