

PEACEKEEPING IN THE BLACK-SEA REGION

Introduction

This paper addresses the concept of peacekeeping as it relates to the policies and actions of parties, nation-states and various organizations in the Black Sea region where tensions of various types have been present already. Peacekeeping could relate to the current undisputable single-hearted intentions of these parties involved in the preservation of peace. Peacekeeping as a term looks to incorporate such actions that would take the peace process and further it via e.g. monitoring and supervision of acts that aim to rehabilitate the situation. As peacekeeping is not meant to impose policies for the “making” of peace in a troubled area, it should be noted that peacekeeping policies should not take sides but report impartially to the fulfillment of the conditions for the preservation of peace.

The term frozen conflicts, as the name would suggest, refers to the case of a stalemate in conflict resolution due to a lack of a reasonable solution. Additionally, in the case of frozen conflicts it is in the interest of some to preserve such a stalemate and keep the *status quo* for various reasons. This paper explores the peacekeeping initiatives in the areas of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Georgia and South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Moldova and Transnistria.

Border disputes, ethnic, national and religious diversity and tensions, poverty, corruption, authoritarian government and organized crime are only a few of the reasons why relatively young states after the fall of the Soviet Union are still bent by hidden or obvious situations of conflict. “Frozen conflicts” are also referred to separatist conflicts due to the fact of mass bloodshed and at the same time sentiments and opinions are being passed on to the future generations. Even though the separatist frozen conflicts could be small, the peculiar fact is that they have been settled not through peace deals but simply by “freezing” their respective positions.

Additionally, this work looks at the involvement of major international and regional actors. The key nations and organisations interested and involved in the areas of conflict in the post-Soviet space are Russia, USA, with NATO, and the European Community. As it could be suggested, Russia is still one of the dominating and influential players that continues to exert its leverage in the regional realities and flex its muscles. Some argue that Russia still plays the most active role in the peace making process in its Near Abroad. Truly, Russia today is the state which has considerable might and power, power which could be easily seen as a Russian obligation and allowance, given that these states have once been under Russian influence. However, there are criticisms and conflicting interests from various sides, such as those of NATO and the EU¹, or the states being affected by Russia’s policies and interventions, about its dominance in the region and refusal to stay out of the affairs of the states from the former Russian Empire.

Section 1

The Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh

The dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh (N-K) has been one of the longest and the bloodiest in the post Soviet era with its six-year ethnic war. It is seen as similar to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in that in both cases each of the conflicting sides

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the EU is going to be considered a unitary entity with common policy objectives and policies

claim their interests in dominating a certain area, and in this case N-K. It has been also characterised as a dangerous mixture because of the presence of polemic issues such as oil, Islamic fundamentalism, traditional beliefs, cold-war alliances, and claims of genocide. Here, the movement by ethnic Armenians in N-K is seen as irredentist, stranded on a Christian land, and at the same time in Islamic Caspian Sea (*Nagorno-Karabakh*). Azerbaijan, on its part, has claims over N-K as is an integral part of the territory of Azerbaijan. Armenia, on the other hand, has claimed the territory to be part of Armenia basing its beliefs on historical accounts and also pointing to the existence of a large number of Armenian villages as well as the predominantly Armenian population in the region. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, a survey showed that in N-K Autonomous region there were approximately 145,600 Armenians (76.4 %) while the Azeris comprised approximately 22.4% of the population with the balance of the population comprising of several thousand Russians, Kurds, Greeks, and Assyrians (*Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh*, 1994, p. xii). The main language spoken in N-K is Armenian, even though it differs from the language spoken in Armenia as the N-K Armenian has been influenced by Russian, Turkish and Persian. It has been argued that as a result of the clashes which followed, or of an “ethnic cleansing”, no person of Azeri origin stayed in the territory of N-K (Guliyev, 2002, p. 2). In 2001, was reported that Armenian population in N-K was approximately 95%, and there remained the Assyrians, Greeks, and Kurds. Nagorno-Karabakh, in comparison to Armenia and Azerbaijan, has expressed its willingness and readiness not to be part of any of the two, but be an autonomous state expressing its right of self determination.

Turkey

It could be seen that Armenia is somewhat wedged between the Islamic countries of Iran, Turkey, and Azerbaijan. As Armenia was of one the first countries to recognize Christianity as a national religion in 302 AD, some have argued that has led to their mass murder and genocide centuries later at the hands of the Turks seeking to cleanse the region of the Christian religion and Christians (*Nagorno-Karabakh*). As a result, the Armenian recognition and commemoration of their genocide in 1965 have led to its strained relationship with Turkey and the closing of the mutual border. For the past 16 years Turkey has been imposing an economic embargo against Armenia, following Armenia’s conflict with neighbouring Azerbaijan. Today there have been efforts made by both Armenia and Turkey to address that disagreement and open their borders, but Armenia’s conflict with a key Turkish ally as Azerbaijan has showed to still play an important role in the Armenian-Turkish relations. Turkey has been opposing strongly such grave accusations as “Armenian *genocide*”, and the matter has appeared to be a sensitive one for the United States. The U.S. has demonstrated its concern over the disagreement between the Turkey and Armenia, and a recent visit of US Head of State Barack Obama has shown that he would be interested to see a resolution of that dispute. Although President Obama has been wary and has declined to explicitly condemn the Turkish acts, he has asserted that his beliefs have not changed. Instead, the he has expressed his interest and support for the relations between the two countries to develop into a more positive manner (Jones, 2009). Efforts have been made for more frequent joint endeavors and that has been obvious in the visit of President Abdullah Gul to Yerevan in September 2008 which has made him to be the first Turkish Head of State to visit Armenia. Also, Turkish authorities move to launch an Armenian TV station in Turkey have been seen as a leap forward to improving their relations. Armenia, on its part, has backed the Turkish initiative of a Caucasian platform for stability and cooperation (*European Neighbourhood Policy*, 2009). However, in the context of discussing the N-K conflict and its settlement, the improving of relations between Turkey and Armenia would easily mean the worsening of relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Given the fact that they are seen as close allies and fellow Islamic

states, the Azeri move to sell its gas resources to Russia instead of Turkey was seen as a warning sign to the Turkish authorities not to open its Armenian borders until the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijan. The prospect of that taking place, however, is seen as highly unlikely. Gas analysts believe that supply is crucial for a planned gas pipeline, Nobucco, to run through Turkey to Europe (Jones, 2009). Washington, on its part, is putting pressure on Ankara to open its Armenian borders which, however, could result in high levels of resentment and disapproval from the Turkish public.

The EU

The efforts and contribution of the European Community in resolving the N-K conflict is reflected in two main initiatives: firstly, its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) translated into its European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) and its Action Plans (AP); and secondly the EU Special Representative (EUSR) to the South Caucasus.

The ENP aims to secure and develop partnerships with the EU's new neighbours as that has been vital for the promotion and the benefit of security, stability, and prosperity. It has also the objective and commitment to partner with its new neighbours and share common political, economic, and institutional reforms; the ENP looks at the prevention of conflicts and their resolution (Commission of the European Communities, 2005, p. 3). Even though the EU has articulated the launch of the ENP and its main strategic policy objectives could be clear, analysts argue that it has done little in resolving or addressing the conflicts in the South Caucasus.

First of all, information about the ENP APs is not widely accessible. This is especially the case when discussing the states of Armenia and Azerbaijan (Freizer, 2006). Because of the low awareness of what exactly the EU has been trying to do for the peaceful settlement of the N-K conflict, Azeris and Armenians understandably have little aspirations and low expectations of the EU. *Conflict resolution* is not seen as a priority in the AP for Armenia. It is satisfied with a vague language looking for “*increase[d] diplomatic efforts and support for a peaceful resolution of the conflict*” (cited in Freizer, 2006).

Differences in the way conflict prevention is addressed in the Action Plans for Armenia and for Azerbaijan adds to the inadequate position of the European Community to address the conflict. In the *ENP AP for Armenia*, the N-K conflict is listed as a policy Number 7 looking to “*contribute to a peaceful solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict... [through] increased diplomatic efforts, including the EUSR...increased political support of the OSCE Minsk Group...[and] intensify the EU dialogue with the parties concerned*”(EU/Armenia Action Plan, 2006, p. 9). In the *ENP AP for Azerbaijan*, in contrast, the N-K conflict resolution is a policy Number 1 in priority (EU/Azerbaijan Action Plan, 2006, p.3)². It also emphasizes the EU's aim to resolve the N-K conflict by stating its intention to support the OSCE Minsk Group, and its readiness to strengthen its engagement in the peacekeeping and peacemaking it N-K. The specific peacekeeping actions or operations of the EC raise questions. In Azerbaijan, for example, the Community seems to be more focused on the actual settlement of the conflict (“increase diplomatic efforts”, “increase political support”, “intensify EU dialogue with the states concerned”) rather than on “accompanying” measures (civil society initiatives, de-mining, assistance for internally displaced persons (IDP)) (Wolf, 2007, p. 2).

² The EU and Azerbaijan had first established contractual relations in 1996 through a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement entering into force in 1999. The EU/Azerbaijan ENP Action Plan has been adopted in 2006 for the period of five years, and since then, its implementation has been guided and monitored (Commission of the European Communities, 2008, 2).

The EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and its role

The EUSR for the South Caucasus was appointed in July 2003. However, the mandate is seen as very broad and with small staff and budget. The mandate of the current EUSR, Peter Semneby, has been strengthened with increased staff, the establishment of some local presence and a raised budget (from € 370,000 to € 2,960,000) (Wolf, 2007, p.3). However, in an interview in 2006, Peter Semneby pointed out that such an adjustment of the mandate would actually change little in practical terms, even though it is an important political sign (Wolf, 2007, p. 3-4). Given the lack of any concrete activity of the EUSR under the preceding mandate, this could be hardly taken as an encouraging sign.

USA

As a result of Armenians gaining forcible control over Karabakh in May 1992, an Azeri-populated enclave, Nakhchivan, seceded from Armenia. Fears of possible escalation of actions have led to demands for action by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which is now known as Organisation for Security and Cooperation of Europe (OSCE), and the UN. The co-chairs of the resulting Minsk Group are the U.S., Russia, and France, and since 1992, the CSCE/OSCE Minsk Group has been mediating the dispute. Due to the fact that the US is a co-chair and a mediator in the process, officially its stance is neutral. However, the U.S. Congress has been considered to favour Armenia. Section 907 of Public Law 102-517 in 1992 has banned U.S. aid to the government of Azerbaijan, aiming to pressure it and make it lift its blockades on Armenia and Karabakh. It has used its foreign aid legislation to pressure Azerbaijan, and formerly, Turkey, to change their policies (Migdalovitz, 2003, p. 14). However, on 10 January 2002, with the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act of 2002, the President was granted the authority to waive section 907 as it was deemed necessary to support the U.S. efforts to combat terrorism and step up the operational readiness of the U.S. armed forces.

Another important fact that should be noted is the considerable amount of Armenian-Americans in the U.S. and their ability to influence the policies of the U.S. Armenian-Americans are about 1.5 million and well-organised and well-funded. The Clinton Administration sought not to offend its Armenian-American population while simultaneously looking for a way to ensure good relations with Azerbaijan and to guarantee and ease the access for the U.S. energy industry there. The goals of the U.S. in the former Soviet Union have been stability, democracy, market economies, and peace among states; and conflicts in the region threaten such aims. The U.S. first recognized Armenia, in December 1991, before Azerbaijan, in February 1992, as the first Bush Administration considered that Armenia started to adhere to the Helsinki principles earlier. A good U.S. relation with Armenia has been seen as factor promoting an alignment of Azerbaijan with Iran. However, the Azeri-Iranian relations are complicated due to the fact that there is a considerable Azeri population in Iran and there is a fear in Iran of possible Azeri demands of cultural autonomy, national territorial autonomy, or struggles for national independence. The U.S. State Department has preferred peacemaking via the OSCE as opposed to the U.N. The reasons for that are that Iran has not been an OSCE member, the U.N. resources are overstretched and costly, and because the framework of the OSCE might constrain Russia.

The U.S. still desires a resolution of the N-K conflict and its peaceful settlement through the Minsk Group. The cooperation between the co-chairs is seen as smooth, and America

believes that the future status of N-K is a matter of negotiation between the parties. The U.S. aims to reach a lasting and comprehensive political solution of the conflict, it recognizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and it does not recognize N-K as an independent country. (Bureau of the European and Eurasian Affairs, 2008).

NATO

NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme has been launched in 1994 with the aim to bring more countries into the common objectives of the organization. Currently there are 22 partner countries, with Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova all joining in 1994. In practice, the PfP is a bilateral relation between NATO and the participating state, in which among the main principles are the "*pursue of democracy, respect of international law, the respect and observance of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international disarmament and arms control agreement, the refrain of the use of force, respect of existing borders, or the settlement of dispute peacefully*" (Partnership for Peace, 2009). The programme is realized in two-year periods which are tailored according to each country's specific interests and needs. It is based more particularly on defence-related work, defence reform, and policies related to defence reform.

Russia

From the birth of the OSCE Minsk Group, Russia has been expressing its support for peace-making in N-K. Some of the perceived initial reasons for Russia not adopting an interventionist approach include the fact that it was preoccupied with domestic issues, wary of accusations of imperialism, i.e. seeking influence in the Caucasus region, and also that it was careful not to complicate its relations with Turkey and Iran. Nonetheless, Russia aligns itself with Armenia in their common distrust of Turkey which has led Russia to give support and aid to Armenia. All this, however, opens the possibility of destabilizing the region which is clear to Moscow which still has a stake in the oil and gas resource rich region. As Russia has provided troops to secure the Armenian borders with Turkey and Iran, in June 1994 Armenia permitted Russian military bases to be positioned in Armenia (Migdalovitz, 2003, p. 13). The May 1992 Armenian seizure of the Lachin and the attack of Nakhchivan have been condemned by Moscow which asserted that it would not support such an illegal action. It was regarded as a violation of the 1992 Treaty on Collective Security and also as a threat to the stability of the region. However, the first President of Armenia, Ter-Petrosyan, declared that aggression was committed against Armenia, making the treaty void. As a response, Moscow asserted that the Treaty was not envisioning "*quick intervention*" and that it was oriented to consultations.

Russia's condemnation of Armenia's 1993 conquests was based on its concerns that instability in the region could have a spillover effect on Russia's northern Caucasus region, or Chechnya. Thus, it sought to station its troops to Azerbaijan's borders with Iran and Turkey. In July 1997, Baku and Moscow signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, condemning separatism and looking to promote the settlement of conflicts according to the principle of territorial integrity. Later that year, however, Yerevan and Moscow signed the Treaty of Friendship describing the two parties' coincidence of military and strategic views. It was described by the two parties as a strategic partnership resembling a form of an alliance. As the Russian-Azeri Treaty had no comparative provisions, officials from Baku expressed their objections. Even though Russian official have said that the Treaty is not "directed against Azerbaijan", Azerbaijan condemned Russia's lack of impartiality (Migdalovitz, 2003, p.13).

Today, Russia stays committed to the Minsk Process and its position as a co-chair. Initiatives by Russia to host meetings between the two counterparts are seen as efforts seeking to show that Russia is not necessarily an instigator of conflicts in the Caucasus, but also a power that is able to work for their resolution. It is believed that Russia is trying to rehabilitate itself by showing that its peacekeeping missions and troops could still play an important role in the region. What is more, it is believed that Moscow would make efforts to integrate its troops in the Lachin Corridor – the passage that links Karabakh with Armenia proper. Because of the clear visions and priorities of Russia for the settlement of the N-K conflict, Medvedev could try to convince Sarkisian and Alyev that the peacekeeping troops there should be largely or wholly Russian (*Russia Steps Up Efforts on Nagorno-Karabakh*, 2008). Analysts argue that Moscow is now trying to continue to influence its main ally, Armenia, especially after the August 2008 clash with Georgia and the raising tensions in the region.

Section 2

The Conflict in Georgia

After a brief period of independence from 1918 to 1921, Georgia was incorporated into the Soviet Union. With the rise of nationalist movements in the late 1980s, Georgia declared independence on April 9 1991, and since then, its history has been marked with instability and the breakaway of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.

Abkhazia

The UN Security Council issued a resolution on Georgia in 1993 calling for a ceasefire and the establishing of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). As fighting was continuing, Russian troops, under the flag of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), were deployed in the region under the Moscow Ceasefire Agreement in May 1994 (*Conflict history: Georgia*, 2008). Negotiations took place within the Geneva Peace Process chaired by the UN, facilitated by Russia, and observed by OSCE and the U.S., Germany, UK, and Russia. As a de facto Abkhaz parliament was supporting independence from Georgia, UN-led talks have stalled, with the rejection of the option of autonomy within Georgia. With an escalation of clashes and blasts in 2008 which took several casualties, Russian support was increased, which reinforced international efforts with the aim of a peaceful resolution. Three-phase talks have been one of the plans proposed as a confidence-building measure, along with the return of refugees and support for economic development (*Peace plan for Abkhazia*, 2008).

South Ossetia

Russia was able to broker a ceasefire in 1992 with the Sochi Agreement, which brought in Russian, Georgian, and Ossetian peacekeepers and the establishment of a quadripartite negotiation mechanism, the Joint Control Commission (JCC), with Russian, Georgian, North and South Ossetian participation. The OSCE also participated in the JCC, but lacked an active role in the negotiations. Negotiations on South Ossetia have been in deadlock since the launch of the JCC, and the fact that both Russia and North Ossetia were clearly biased in favour of South Ossetia led Tbilisi to repeatedly call for the internationalization of the format. That is why in March 2008 Georgia decided to no longer participate in the JCC (Nilsson, 2008).

Russia and its involvement in the Georgian conflicts

In the context of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it is believed that the outcome of the conflicts would determine the final outlook of the presidency of Medvedev, the relationship between the West and the Kremlin, and the future of the Caspian Sea energy supplies. It is believed that Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been supported by Russia in its strategic goal to weaken Tbilisi’s authority. Comparing the actual and available power and resources of Georgia and Russia would only serve to further highlight the vast disparity of the two countries (see Table 1). However, President Saakashvili has assumed that his western allies, USA and Britain, would support and protect him. On the other hand, Russia is seen to have provoked the conflict by giving support to the Georgian breakaway regions, by granting their citizens Russian citizenship, and by arming separatist forces while playing the role of an “fair” peace broker in the region. Also, Moscow is believed to have deported Georgian citizens from Russia, and it has imposed blockades on the import of Georgian goods (Beeston, 2008).

Table 1
Georgia v Russia: By numbers³

	Georgia	Russia:
Population	4.6 million	140 million
Army	18,000	400,000
Tanks	128	23,000
Fighter jets	9	1,736

Georgian membership in NATO is seen in Moscow as a challenge to its dominance into what is called Russia’s “near abroad,” or the former Soviet republics. As a result, Russia has done everything possible to prevent any NATO expansion on its western and southern flanks. A scenario of Georgian success to impose its sovereignty over South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the face of Russian opposition could be considered a huge defeat to Moscow’s influence in the region and the other former Soviet republics.

The ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are of strategic importance to the geopolitical reality of the South Caucasus region. The accusation can be made that it has been in Russia’s interest to fuel the ethnic Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflicts and further disturb the Georgian state.

Moscow’s interest in and pursuit of guaranteeing the security of the whole Caucasus region could be seen in its quest to influence the region’s functioning. First, Moscow sees its peacekeepers as a kind of a Russian “obligation” to secure the wellbeing of its post-Soviet citizens and, second, as a way to show the West that Russia is not going to accept any interference with its dominance in the region.

Russian peacekeeping

After the August 2008 war, a ceasefire agreement was brokered by the EU. Under that agreement, Russia was required to withdraw all its forces from the buffer zones in South Ossetia and Abkhazia leaving EU observers to take over security. However, Russia refused to leave South Ossetia and Abkhazia despite the agreement of August 12, 2008, according to which Russia had to withdraw its forces to the positions it had occupied prior to the war with

³ **Source:** (*Russia ‘invades’ Georgia as South Ossetia descends towards war*, 2008)

Georgia. The response from Kremlin was centered on their claim that “realities have changed” after their recognition of the two regions as independent states (Harding, 2008). What is more, it said it planned to garrison 7,500 troops there. Russia’s Defence Ministry has asserted that peacekeeping troops in South Ossetia should be fortified, in order to prevent any other escalation of the conflict there (*Russia ‘starts Georgia pull-back’*, 2008). Apart from its reluctance to leave Georgian territories, Moscow has shown that it could use its regional leverage power to halt the conflict, yet at the same time start a diplomatic war.

Additionally, the peace talks, which were scheduled to take place on 18-19 May 2009 in Geneva, between Russia, the separatist groups of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Georgia have been stalled. The main reason for that was Russia’s refusal to attend. Moscow said that it would not attend a peace-keeping summit without the presence of partner Abkhazia (*Russia pulls out of agency talks-agency report*, 2008). Abkhaz leaders, on their part, refused to attend the peace talks as they had “not yet received a draft report from U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon” (*Russia pulls out of agency talks-agency report*, 2008).

EU and the Georgian conflict

In response to the conflict that took place on August 8, 2008, the EU has established the Council of the European Union’s Monitory Mission (EUMM) in Georgia. It is an autonomous mission led by the EU under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Its main purposes are to contribute to the stability of the whole Georgian territory and the surrounding region. In the short run, the objectives are to contribute to the stabilization of the situation there, in accordance with the six-point Agreement⁴ and its implementing measures. Its main tasks are to monitor and analyze the situation based on the full compliance with the six-point Agreement, the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, and to contribute to the reduction of tensions (*European Monitory Mission (EUMM) in Georgia*, 2008).

The mediation efforts have been mainly done by the OSCE, which has been involved in these conflicts’ resolution since early 1990s. In support of the French brokered peace plan, the OSCE managed to increase its military observers to from 200 to 300. It was the OSCE and the EU, under its French Presidency, that invested significant sources into the conflict. On the one hand, the OSCE Chairman in Office, Finnish Foreign Minister, Alexander Stubb, invested a considerable amount of energy to visit Moscow in an effort to prevent a further escalation of the conflict. On the other hand, France was involved into a “shuttle diplomacy” between Moscow and Tbilisi at the highest diplomatic level, which led the EU to develop the Six-Point Piece Plan in August 2008, subsequently signed by both Russia and Georgia (Markovic, 2008).

The observed conflict, however, ignited some divisions within the EU. On the one hand, there are Member States such as France and Germany which opposed a firm EU reaction against

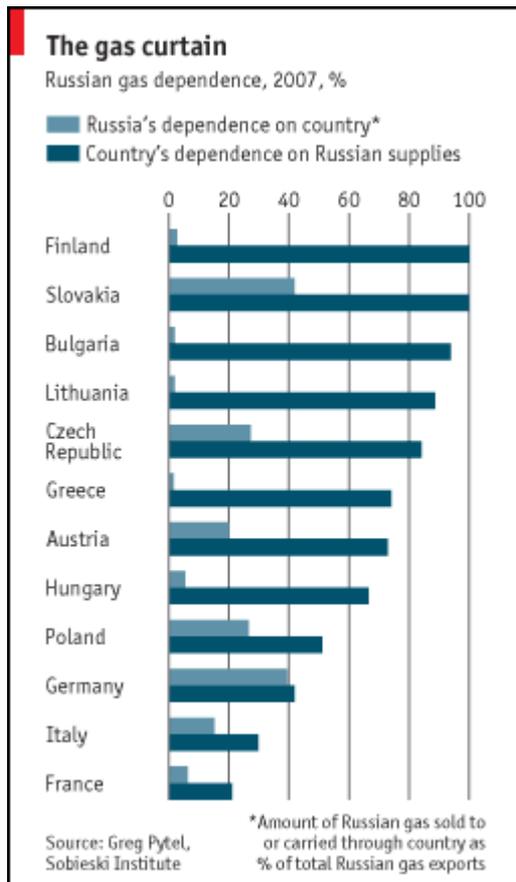
⁴ The six-point Agreement is a Georgia-Russia cease fire pact brokered by the French presidency and detailed by the EU Foreign Ministers on 13 August 2008. It denounces the use of force; looks for a lasting cease fire of the hostilities; free access to humanitarian aid providers; for Georgian forces to withdraw from their usual barracks; Russian forces to go back to positions they have held prior to the outbreak of hostilities, and pending an international peace monitoring mechanism, Russian peacekeepers should take additional security measure; and looks to launch international discussions on security and stability arrangements for Abkhazia and South Ossetia (*Six-point cease fire agreement*, 2008).

Russia and looking for a more diplomatic solution to the conflicts in Georgia. On the other hand, states such as Poland, the UK, Italy, and Sweden pushed for a firmer reaction to the Russian policies. Regardless of the divisions in the EU, the bloc was able to come up with a common decision and convene the Extraordinary European Council on 1 September 2008, which condemned Russia for its actions and recognition of the independence of the Abkhaz and South Ossetian regions. Despite its internal division, the EU expressed its support for the French brokered peace deal and appointed the EU Special Representative for Georgia (Markovic, 2008).

Russia refused to take into account the diplomatic warning from the EU and cede control of the break-away regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Even though there had been an agreement according to which President Medvedev had to abide by the cease fire terms brokered by Nicolas Sarkozy, it was reported that troops had stayed near the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. Medvedev claimed that the agreement between him and President Sarkozy was on a “pulling-back” and not a “withdrawal” of Russian troops (*Russia ‘starts Georgia pull back’*, 2008). Tensions continued, as there were disagreements on where the EU observers would be allowed to go, or how many Russian soldiers would remain in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. One reason for the misunderstandings between Russia and the EU was the fact that the peace deal was really vague and unclear. Experts of cease-fire negotiations were appalled by the text of the document, which exists in multiple inconsistent versions and lacks vital specifics of dates and posts (*Cold comfort*, 2008). This, on the other side, has allowed Russia to interpret the document in different ways and even require from the state of Georgia to abide by the agreement.

Brussel’s decision not to impose real economic sanctions on Russia was embraced by Moscow and considered as “realistic” and “reasonable” (*Cold comfort*, 2008). It is believed that it was far easier for the EU to use the incentives of “carrots” rather than “sticks” when dealing with Russia. Offering financial support for the reconstruction of Georgia is seen by the EU as a more preferable option to the one of punishing Russia. The reason for that is the fact that that EU is Russia’s largest trade partner, and also there is a great dependency of Russian oil and gas to its Members States, with Finland, Slovakia, and Bulgaria having close to 100 per cent dependency (see Figure 1 on following page). That could be a reason why the EU policies in Georgia have been measured and balanced. Truly the EU policy has resembled the one of an unbiased mediator; however, there are some that criticize its role as ineffective and vague, giving Russia room to move undisturbed by the international community. Still, it would be wrong to believe that Moscow is thoroughly undisturbed by the international community in its actions, an example being its search for support from neighbouring countries and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Figure 1⁵



USA

The United States is seen as the main supporter and ally of Georgia. President Saakashvili has been backed by the West, and he was educated in the U.S. His main policy objectives have been to reform the Georgian state and transform it into a truly democratic one. Among the main policy objectives of Mikheil Saakashvili have been major economic and political reforms, making him a truly Western oriented president, membership of NATO and a closer EU relationship.

Georgia's geostrategic position on a key transit route for oil and gas from the Caspian Sea to the West has made it a vital area and a battle-ground of the interests of the U.S. and Russia. The region has significance for USA in terms of boosting its energy security and diversifying its energy supplies away from the OPEC cartel. With international oil companies spending large sums of money exploring and developing the areas of Azerbaijan and the region of the Caspian Sea, Georgia is of significant importance and has been on the receiving end of U.S. assistance. The U.S. financial support for Georgia has totaled more than 1 billion USD, making Georgia one of the top per capita recipients (German, 2004, p. 6). Even though a formal American military commitment in the region was assumed remote and not considered of vital strategic interest to Washington, that has changed after the terrorist attacks in 11 September 2001 (German, 2004, p. 6).

⁵ Source: (Cold Comfort, 2008)

As a response to a terrorist threat registered by the U.S. intelligence, Washington launched military training and deployed a considerable amount of military equipment in Georgia in order to prevent nations-states from becoming a breeding ground of terrorism or extremism. The U.S. arrived in Georgia in May 2002 with the Train and Equip Program (GTEP) for Georgia. It aimed to train Georgian troops and make them capable to deal effectively with terrorist threats as well as make Georgia a more secure and stable place (German, 2004, p. 6). Even though the military equipment provided in the course of the GTEP was not intended to re-arm the entire Georgian army, it managed to provide some permanent transfer of military equipment to Georgia such as communications equipment, small arms, or uniforms (German, 2004, p.8).

Apart from the U.S.'s interest to guarantee energy alternatives from the Caspian region and Central Asia, it has also strived to guarantee the security of the whole Caucasus region. The U.S. has been doing everything possible to clear the Black Sea-Caspian corridor for free international trade and collective security which so far has been impeded by Russian oppression and policies in the region. The U.S. has pursued free access and trade and energy flows to the West and because of that it has supported Georgia on its road to democratic practices and prosperity.

In a response to the Russian invasion of Georgia in August 2008, the U.S. brought to a stop the US-Russian civilian nuclear co-operation pact. The White House had also pledged to donate \$5.57 million to Georgia, and the U.S. Secretary of State at the time, Condoleezza Rice, expressed the American position that Russia's policies had not been measured or productive but indicative to its neo-colonial intentions (McKeeby, 2008). Russian policies were seen as not exemplary for a country looking to join the European and world communities and as giving a bad example of how a regional power should behave. The U.S. said that no humanitarian assistance could make up for the civilian casualties incurred during the August 2008 war. All this has reinforced the American aid commitments to Georgia (McKeeby, 2008).

Section 3

The case in Moldova

The problem of Transnistria could be traced back to 1924 when the Soviet authorities of that time created the so-called Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic on the left bank of the Dniester (Nistru) River, along the eastern border of Romania. The main part of today's Moldova lies in the historical region situated between the Prut and the Dniester rivers and the Black Sea coast. As part of the ancient principality of Moldova, which also included parts of today's Romania, this region has been under the Ottoman Rule until 1812 to become part of the Russian empire and become a province called Bessarabia.

After the October Revolution in 1917, the Moldovan Republic was proclaimed in Bessarabia in 1918, and in 1919 its government decided to become part of Romania (CSCE Conflict Prevention Center, 1994, p.1). However, the USSR never recognized Romania's right to that province. That is why in 1924 the narrow Ukrainian strip of land on the left bank of the Dniester River was declared by the Soviet authorities as the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, as a way to re-claim the land of Bessarabia. As a result, in June 1940, the Soviet Union, following the secret deal with Nazi Germany in the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, occupied Bessarabia and shortly after that the Moldavian SSR was created, comprising most of Bessarabia and the strip of land known today as Transnistria (Maksymiuk, 2006, p.1).

At that time, the Ukrainian SSR was given parts of northern and southern Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina and the Black Sea coastal line. During the Second World War in 1941, Romania managed to re-conquer Bessarabia but lost the province again in 1944 to the Soviet Union. Thus, in 1947 Romania was forced to recognize the formal incorporation of Bessarabia into the Soviet Union under the Paris Peace treaties (CSCE Conflict Prevention Center, 1994, p. 1).

The Russian factor

The key factor for the stalemate in Transnistria, it has been largely argued, is the direct Russian political, financial, and military support that has been invested in the Transnistrian region. It could be noted that the type of peacekeeping Russia has imposed in the region differs from the one the international community would use due to the fact that it lacks the mandate of an international organization. Currently, the peacekeeping format in the Republic of Moldova (RoM) is one dominated by Russia. With the help of the 14th Russian Army, it has been acting as a shield for the leadership of the breakaway Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (TMR), and combined with its authoritarian regime, it has contributed to the preservation of the *status quo*. The mere existence of a huge amount of arms stored in the area is seen as a real threat to the stability and security of the entire region. The withdrawal of Russian forces from the TMR areas is an international obligation of Russia under the 1999 OSCE and the Conventional Arms Forces in Europe (CFE) Summits. Its military presence in the region without a peacekeeping mandate constitutes a violation of internationally recognized peacekeeping principles and of the Constitution of RoM.

In an attempt to settle the conflict in Transnistria, a Memorandum on the “Normalisation of Relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Transnistrian Moldovan Republic” was initiated by Russia and signed in May 1997. It promoted the concept of a “common state” as the main factor for the solution of the conflict. Negotiations between the parties based on the Memorandum proved to be unproductive due to the differences in the way each party has chosen to interpret the legal meaning of the “common state” term. That led to a stalemate and the withdrawal of RoM from the negotiations in 2001 (Spanu, p.3). RoM returned to the negotiation table in 2002 to take part in the negotiations for the Kiev Document, which brought the idea of the federalized model, looking at the federal structure as a way to settle the conflict, with Russia and Ukraine having the key roles in the whole negotiation process (Spanu, p. 3).

The Kozak Memorandum, brokered by the Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration Dmitri Kozak in November 2003, also known as the “Memorandum on the Basic Principles of the State Structures of the United State”, pushed further the idea of a federal Moldova. It called for the acceptance by RoM of a continued Russian presence via military bases on the territory of RoM for a period of 20 years. The negative response by the international community and the huge unrest which erupted in Moldova’s civil society, however, led to the refusal of the President of RoM Vladimir Voronin to sign the memorandum. Putin has reportedly nursed a feeling of resentment ever since.

The civil society in Moldova proposed a plan in 2004, as an alternative plan to the federalization of Moldova, coming with the 3-D strategy: Demilitarisation, Decriminalisation, and Democratisation. That document was endorsed by the citizens of Moldova, the USA in 2004 and the EU in 2005. It was looking to strengthen the existing five-party conflict settlement format of “3 plus 2” (comprising Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE, plus Moldova and TMR) by transforming it into a new one: “3 plus 1 plus 3” including Romania, Moldova,

the U.S. and the EU, effectively excluding TMR and involving the West in the process. It could be thus concluded that one of Russia's relatively recent attempts to enforce a settlement, namely 2003 the Kozak Memorandum, has shown that its influence, even though pervasive, has obvious limits. It has not been able to create a settlement without the support of Moldova and the international community, especially OCSE, the USA and the EU (Spanu, p.3).

In late 2006, Moldovan President Voronin began a process of repairing his relations with Russia, seeking its cooperation in the negotiation with Transnistria. Even though there were modest gains, overall the results were discouraging for Chisinau. RoM was seeking to portray itself to Moscow as a modest and reasonable party in view of its not recognizing Kosovo and announcing that it has not been seeking NATO membership (Hill, 2008). The reward from Russia to RoM could be traced in light of the events that took place in 2008 in Kosovo and Georgia. Even though Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, it *only* recommended a special status for Transnistria. One day before President Medvedev's announcement of recognition for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, he had reinstated his dedication to a peaceful resolution of the Transdnestrian conflict (Hill, 2008).

At the same time, Transnistrian leaders have been doing their best to halt any development of the negotiation process in order to defend the *status quo*. Smirnov of Transnistria caused the annoyance of his Russian and Moldovan counterparts by refusing to meet with Voronin in what turned out to be a widely anticipated meeting for the celebration of the Abkhaz "independence". At the same time, Moldovan negotiators were increasingly frustrated due to the failure of Moscow to come up with a comprehensive Moldovan package, an issue that has been on the table for years (Hill, 2008). On March 18, 2009, President Voronin met with Smirnov of Transnistria and Russian President Medvedev in Moscow. The three issued a joint declaration calling for the resumption of direct talks between Transnistria and RoM under the guidance of Moscow. They expressed their hopes for the incorporation of Russian military presence in Moldova and a peacekeeping force under the supervision of OSCE (Woehrel, 2009, p. 4). Critics have argued that such a statement was signaling the contradiction between the policies and demands of RoM before – for the withdrawal of Russian military presence from Transdnestria – and now, seeming like both RoM and the TMR are of equal footing. However, Voronin pulled out of the subsequent direct talks scheduled for 25 March 2009, following Transnistria's travel bans for EU and U.S. diplomats attempting to visit the region (Woehrel, 2009, p.4).

The EU

Europe was invited with great insistence to join the peace-making process in Moldova which had been dominated mainly by Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE. Since 2003, there has been a considerable amount of thinking and energy spent by the EU on the conflict in Transnistria. It has relied on a wide range of Common Foreign and Security Policies (CFSP) instruments in looking for a settlement of the conflict.

Diplomatic actions

In 2003-2004 the EU appeared to play a diplomatic role in Moldova. Notably, there was the interference and diplomatic activism of Javier Solana in opposition to the "Kozak Memorandum" in 2003, influencing RoM's decision not to sign it. In 2005, in order for the diplomatic missions of Europe to be increased and become more visible, the EU appointed a EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Moldova, Dutch diplomat Adriaan Jacobovits de

Szeged. His main mission has been to contribute to the strengthening of the role of the EU in resolving the Transnistria conflict and to assist in peacebuilding. (Popescu, 2005b, p.7. However, the fact that the EUSR was based in the Hague is seen as a drawback because of his inability to be close to the issues in the region.

EU participation in the negotiations

The EU was involved in the negotiations between Moldovan and Transnistrian officials in the drafting of a new constitution for Moldova in 2003 and the Joint Constitutional Commission. Despite the fact that the Commission ultimately failed to achieve its end, the EU's presence was seen as symbolic and one of the first of its kind. Also, the involvement of the EU regarding the "Kozak Memorandum" showed that the probable solution of the conflict would hardly come into being without EU's endorsement. Since 2003 Europe has organised a series of trilateral consultations with Ukraine and Moldova on the issue of a joint border controls on the border of Moldova and Ukraine and the Transnistrian region. In the ENP Country Report on Moldova in 2005, it was mentioned that Moldova's control over its whole customs territory was a key element for the settlement of the conflict (Popescu, 2005b, p.8). The EU pledged funds in fulfilment of Moldova's proposals for the creation of joint border control on the Ukrainian territory.

Border Monitoring cooperation and Sanctions

In response to invitations from Moldova and Ukraine, the EU created the EU Border Assistance Mission in 2005, so that it could monitor customs and border controls between the two countries, along with the Transnistrian areas. Also, as a response to the position of the leadership of Transnistria and its continued unwillingness to change the *status quo*, in 2003 the European Union and the USA arrived at the idea to restrict the travel freedom of officials from Transdnistria (Popescu, 2005, p.9).

The EU introduced a checking system which resulted in the enhancement of transparency of steel exports from Transnistria to the EU. That measure allowed the Union to be effective without imposing quantitative limitations to Moldova. Steel could no longer be exported without having Moldovan certificates confirming the origin of the steel, and that actually meant that steel factories in Transdnistria could no longer export without custom stamps or supervision from Moldovan authorities. This had a strong impact on TMR, which had to reorient its exports to the East and China, in particular (Popescu, 2005b, p.7).

Regardless of the policies and outcomes that the EU has managed to generate in this region, some experts contend that the response of the Union was "*too late, very little, and inhibited by Russian dominance and its approach in the conflict*" (Socor, 2005). The policies of the EU have been focused on the search of a *political settlement*, with the help of the EUSR, allowing Russian peacekeepers to remain in place. The current negotiating mechanism has been accepted by the EU as "not bad", due to the representation of the conflicting parties in the 5-sided format: Russia, Ukraine, OSCE, RoM and TMR. Such a convergence, however, is seen as a result of the inclination of EU policymakers to approach the situation not based on the interest of the EU as a whole, but as an experiment in EU-Russia relations in conflict settlement in Europe (Socor, 2005). The search for a political solution of the conflict and the negotiating mechanism pursued by the EU is regarded as inherently bad. First, a belief that "all main actors are represented" could suggest that the EU does not aspire to be a main actor or to play a major role in the conflict negotiation. Second, it seems that the EU is still not able to press for the withdrawal of Russian troops, with European advocacies preaching for a

political settlement and for approaching Russian and TMR's troops later with "confidence-building measures" as a substitute for a real policy in this issue (Socor, 2005).

The USA

The U.S. has recognised the territorial integrity of RoM and has been in support of a credible and sustainable negotiated solution to the conflict. The State Department issued in 26 July 2005 a factsheet on the conflict advocating for its peaceful solution (U.S. Department of State, 2005). It expressed its support for the territorial integrity of Moldova and its democratic and economic advancement. The U.S. is of the stance that the credible and sustainable solution of the conflict is vital for the affirmation of democracy and market economy, as well as the security of the Black Sea region (U.S. Department of State, 2005). Furthermore, the US expressed its disappointment in the lack of progress in the peace talks. The problem, according to the stance of the US as part of the OSCE, was not with specific issues or the readiness of the parties to discuss their interests, but with their unwillingness to make constructive compromises and make final and definite decisions (*Refusal To Compromise Dragging out Transnistria Talks, US Says*, 2006). Since the *status quo* has not been acceptable for the US, it urged both parties to come to an agreement on a peaceful and a political settlement. For the US the withdrawal of Russian troops from the region would mean a change of the *status quo*. That is why it has been trying to urge Russia to withdraw its troops and cease waiting for a political settlement of the conflict (*Refusal To Compromise Dragging out Transnistria Talks, US Say*, 2005).

The USA is a strong partner of Moldova and has been attempting to influence its democratic reforms. Washington has maintained good relations with Chisinau and its senior officials and it has not failed to support those in Moldova who have been firmly committed to democratic principles and economic reforms. The four priorities which the U.S. sees in Moldova are democracy, economic development, the frozen conflict in Transnistria, and trans-border crime – in particular human trafficking (Chaudhry, 2008, p. 2). As for Transnistria, the U.S. has remained committed to such a scenario which would guarantee Moldova's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Washington has remained committed to the 5+2 format of negotiation, and because that format has proved to bear little success, the US has been trying to promote informal discussions among the interested parties focusing on confidence-building initiatives (Chaudhry, 2008, p.3).

The USA and NATO Allies have been trying for more than 8 years to urge Russia to fulfill its 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit commitments and withdraw its troops and military facilities from Moldova and Georgia. The NATO Allies have clearly stated that the fulfillment of those commitments is essential for the ratification of the Adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty). In the fall of 2007 the US, along with the NATO Allies, developed a creative package proposal for parallel action for the fulfillment of the remaining Istanbul commitments by Russia and the ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty by NATO Allies (Chaudhry, 2008, p.5). The U.S. refused to ratify the Adopted CFE treaty until some conditions were met, including the withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova. In November 2007 Moscow suspended its observance of the CFE Treaty, attributing the move to a failure of the United States and other countries to ratify the adapted treaty (Woehrel, 2009, p.7).

The U.S. has been providing aid to Moldova in order to help the country meet its political and economic reform objectives. It is estimated that for 2008 the Bush Administration has provided about \$15.3 million USD in aid, and for 2009 a further \$16.96 USD has been

budgeted (Woehrel, 2009, p.8). The aid has been spent to support the creation of independent media, non-government organisations, to foster cultural and civic exchanges in Moldova, as well as improve the business climate and help the country diversify its exports. The U.S. security assistance has been used to help Moldova participate in the Partnership for Peace exercises and to develop its peacekeeping capacity and interoperability with NATO. Funding has been also allotted for strengthening Moldova's borders and for fighting trafficking (Woehrel, 2009, p.8).

Conclusion

Each of the three conflicts discussed above has different and specific characteristics of its origin, geographical significance, historical legacies, or ethnic and cultural peculiarities. At the same time, it has become apparent that both internal and external factors play significant role in the development or lack of development of the observed conflicts.

This paper examined the stakes of each of the major players in the “frozen” conflicts of the Black Sea region. Regional forces such as Russia consider that it is their obligation to maintain a certain level of security and stability in their “near abroad”. However, with the expansion of the EU toward east and the accession of new member states such as Bulgaria and Romania, the Union has got closer to areas of hot conflicts, such as Transnistria. USA has always had an interest in the region, keeping an eye on the democratic and economic situation in the countries of the South Caucasus; at the same time, the inclusion of new allies in NATO has also been a priority for the USA, which could be a risky policy posing the danger of instability and even more aggression.

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