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EU as an actor in the resolution of the ethnic conflicts on the Post-Soviet space

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Special thanks to my parents and my Friends Gurbet Peker and Henrik Hågemark for all the help and encouragement I received during writing this thesis.

To all the youngsters who stand with the weapon day and night on the contact line of the conflicted areas, with hope for peace and security...

This thesis is dedicated to them!

Abstract

The focus of this study is the frozen ethnic conflicts emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These conflicts have been long disregarded by the EU and popped into European foreign policy agenda relatively recently. Thus the study tries to understand, first the security concerns that the unresolved state of these conflicts bear also for the EU security and what policy instruments the Union has managed to deploy for impacting the settlement process and how we can understand the factors hindering this engagement?

The study utilises theoretical insights from ‘regional security complex theory’ for understanding the role of the EU in the resolution of these conflicts. Given the theoretical considerations the main argument of the study can be understood as following: *The frozen ethnic conflicts are part of a security complex other than EU, which determines the degree of actorness that EU can exert across the security complex boundaries over the settlement process of these conflicts.* The argument will be tested by means of case study method having four frozen ethnic conflicts in focus: Conflicts of Transnistria; Abkhazia; South Ossetia; Nagorno Karabakh.

Key Words: frozen ethnic conflicts; regional security, conflict resolution, EU actorness

List of Abbreviations

CFSP	Common Foreign And Security Policy
EaP	Eastern Partnership
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
EU BAM	European Union Border Assistance Mission
JCC	Joint Control Commission
MS	Member States
OSCE	Organisation For Security and Cooperation in Europe
UN	United Nations
EUSR	European Union Special Representative
ICG	International Crisis Group
SC	South Caucasus
CSTO	Organisation Of Collective Security Treaty
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
ISDP	Institute for Security and Development Policy
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty
CIS	Commonwealth Of Independent States

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

After two successful enlargements during the last decade the European Union (EU) has pushed its external borders significantly eastwards to the Black Sea and by that approaching itself to the unresolved space of numerous ethnic conflicts emerged on the ruins of the Soviet Union. The growing tension in the region within the conflicting parties also underpinned by significant increase of military expenditures which once already culminated in a short full-scale war between Georgia and Russia for two Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (august 2008) and their subsequent recognition by the latter, made the international community especially the Western countries to pay more attention to the region of frozen Post-Soviet ethnic conflicts which turns out to melt down increasingly into its open phase of violence again.

One understands that in a new geopolitical situation the conflicts in the region does not only undermine the stability and development of the conflict parties but can have more negative impact on the whole European security in general and not only because of any possibility for resumption of armed phase of these conflicts but also as German notes - ‘they have created security vacuums that are outside of government control, providing ideal conditions for transnational security challenges such as terrorism, organised crime and illegal trafficking to flourish’ (T.C. German 2007; 358). Moreover one can also note that current status quo excludes any possibility for the economic cooperation and integration in the region which is even more frustrating in the view of the strategic location of the Black Sea- South Caucasian region for connecting the Europe to Asia.

While the EU enlargement during the last decade was meant to spread the stability and sustainable development model over its new members, it is clear that enlargement cannot go on eternally and serve as an instrument for exercising own actorness in a relation to the neighbours. The leverage of ‘conditionality’ seems to work less effective for dealing with the problems in the new neighbourhood and requires on EU’s behalf a new strategy for constructive engagement in the conflict settlement in the near abroad. The crisis in Balkans in 90s clearly illustrated that security in the neighbourhood is of highest importance for the centre in order to secure itself from any spill over effects into its own space that can destroy all the achieved peace and stability of the last decades. In that regard, inability to manage the crisis in Balkans became a significant failure for the EU as an international actor, however lots of things have changed ever since and the Community got another opportunity to prove that it can be an effective security actor in its periphery probably with even more stronger stimulus and leverages for that.

Its desire to be more actively engaged in the frozen conflicts settlement the EU has strengthened since 2001 with the declaration of the General Affairs and External Relations Council about the readiness of the Union to play more active role in the conflicted zones of Southern Caucasus for conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation (2331st Council Meeting, General Affairs, 26□27 February 2001)

The will of tight cooperation with all the other international actors involved such as United Nations, OCSE and Council Of Europe was supplemented by intention to boost the bilateral relations with the newly independent former Soviet states for achieving greater degree of effectiveness in the process. The European Security strategy adopted in 2003 became another important step for reinforcing the significance of the region for the overall security of on the European continent and the necessity for the EU to take concrete steps for pushing the peace process ahead. The appointment of the European Special Representative for the region in 2003 and including of the East European and South Caucasian states in the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2005 reaffirmed the Unions position in the region. However these remained mainly formal

measures few things have changed in the essence of the promotion for the peace process.

This thesis will research the factors hindering the effective EU actorness in the resolution of the long-running ethnic conflicts on the Post-Soviet space.

The conflicts to be researched are the Conflict of Transnistria; Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh.

The analysis of all these different conflicts presumably will give better understanding of different factors lying behind not completely effective EU engagement on this space.

1.1 The research problem formulation

Current research will focus on the problems with unresolved frozen conflicts on the Post-Soviet space with its threats for the security of the entire region. More specifically the focus will be drawn on the European Union as an actor in the frozen conflicts resolution in its neighbourhood. For a better exploration of the topic the following research question is set forth:

What can the case of unresolved frozen ethnic conflicts tell us about EU as a security actor?

Despite the serious security concerns that these conflicts bear for the entire Black Sea-Caucasian region and for the EU itself, it has been for long considered not a priority for engagement and the resolution was greatly stored in a frozen state under protectorate of other actors, mainly Russian Federation.

An indeed for the period gone probably the '*expectations-capability*' gap (Hill; 2001) has been the main descriptive features for the Unions actorness specifically regarding the conflicts in its neighbourhood.

Thus, in order to answer the central research question of the thesis following sub-question has been posed.

What can the frozen conflicts tell us about overall security concerns in the region?

While the unresolved state of these conflicts already bear in themselves serious stability threats for the parties affected they inevitably invoke insecurity for the entire region, and understanding of these threats will subsequently ease the task of understanding the role and interests of the external actors in the settlement process.

What are the factors that can constrain the EU's role in the settlement process of these conflicts?

The research will focus on the analysis of the possible factors that presumably impact the effectiveness of the EU as an actor in dealing with the long-lasting conflicts in its near abroad. These factors can lie in different dimensions; Firstly, the problems of cohesion within the Union; difficulties to overcome its inner discrepancies among the Member-States and shape a coordinated approach on the supranational level related to the external policy matters. Additionally the complexity of the geopolitical situation in the region, presence of other global and regional powers whose interests often contradict the others, and almost incompatibility of the positions of the conflicting parties even more complicates any possibility for achieving little progress there.

In that regard the study will examine the state of things in four frozen conflicts, the efforts that EU puts in, existing and future challenges and possibilities for maximising the possibility of sustainable peace and security of the conflicts region.

1.2 Scope of the study

This study will focus on the image of the EU as a security actor in the global arena on the cases of four ethnic frozen conflicts located over the Black Sea-South Caucasian

region. The problems related to the effective exercise of the actorness will be studied on the case of tackling number of ethnic conflicts emerged after the disintegration of the Soviet Union 1991. The studied conflicts are the Transnistria with Moldova; the conflicts of South Ossetia and Abkhazia with Georgia and the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh with Azerbaijan.

While all these conflicts have many similarities in their primary reasons, the principles of the international law that they touch upon and subsequent escalation during the time, the differences are also on the face that can in way ease or the opposite complicate the EU engagement in the resolution of these conflicts.

Due to complexity of given conflicts, with number of actors involved, the study, given the limitation of time and space, is confined only to the role of EU in them. However, it's worth to note that role of Russia in these conflicts is viewed as an exceptional and consideration of its policies towards the conflicting parties cannot be avoided. This will also give us clearer understanding of EU's actorness strategies in these conflicts.

The time period relevance for studying the conflict development dynamics embraces mostly the period of the last decade from 2001 until now when the EU has become more actively involved in the resolution of these long-lasting conflicts.

The research outcomes can be considered valid and generalised only with the application of the given cases, however some general assumptions could be used in the similar research elsewhere also.

1.3 Literature review

The problem of unresolved ethnic conflicts on the Post-Soviet space has long been not only the source of concern for the affected parties and the entire international but also became a subject for numerous academic discussions. Emerged number of analytical centres focusing on the monitoring and analysis of the conflict dynamics in the region.

For instance in Sweden among others are SIPRI and ISDP that have constant focus on the issues of frozen ethnic conflicts.

However even in the situation when the conflicts are constantly scrutinised from different angles, the amount of comprehensive research related to the role of EU in the resolution of these conflicts is definitely limited. In that regard the search for previous research on the topic has yielded number of scholars who have been active in researching the problem from the EU perspective. These scholars are Nathalie Tocci who has bundle of books and articles on the subject as well as Dov Lynch and Svante Cornell, who can be regarded as the scholars advocating for deeper EU engagement in the resolution process. ALL these contributions with number of others would be utilized in the upcoming sections of this thesis.

Also any research attempt that has in its focus the EU actions beyond its borders especially in such a complicated environment as of the frozen ethnic conflicts are would necessarily lead to the dilemma of the concept clarification of the EU actorness on the global arena.

In this regard the conventional literature on the EU actorness on the international arena has long suffered from the difficulties to get released from the chains of rational theories with state-centrism in its very core as the main actor in the anarchical order of international relations. As Rosamond notes it is very difficult to find suitable theoretical framework for defining the role of EU on the international arena since the Union lacks complete image of statehoodness with defined interests, which does not allow it to be full international actor (Rosamond 2005: 465). The EU has been viewed as *sui generis* given the distinctness of the Union allowing paving ways for alternative explanations of Communities role as an external actor (Bretherton and Vogler 2006: 12). Distinctive features allow looking for conceptualisation in a totally another dimension –neither state nor international organisation. However many scholar believe that the distinct nature of EU will be altered in the future when it turns into federations and acquires all the conventional features of statehoodness (Nieman 2011, Tilikainen 2001: 234).

Great amount literature has been devoted to find suitable concept for describing EU as a new rising power what kind of power is EU? – the question which has been probably mostly discussed in that regard. Academic discussion in 70s was driven mostly towards the view of EU as a ‘Civilian Power’, which refers to the Community as a set of MS with inclination to contribute to the solution of various international conflicts by civilian means without using any military leverages (Nieman 2011 op.cit. 5).

Despite the importance of the CPE concept it has been however soundly criticised by many scholars afterwards with the launch of deeper defence policy integration because of concept stretching, a weakening of the EU’s distinct profile of having a civilian international identity (Nieman 2011; Zielonka 1998; Smith 2000; Moravcsik 2003; Treacher 2004).

Lately it has been in the fashion to use the concept of ‘Normative Power Europe’ set forth by Manners (2002) which in turn has been harshly criticised for being too vague in its criteria for assessing the empirical data. The scepticism among the scholars prevail about the normative image of the Union, its doubtful legitimacy, ‘the problematic nature of normative processes in terms of reflexivity and inclusiveness with lack of normative impact’ (Nieman 2011; 7) Fernandes 2008; Darbouche 2008; Portela 2008; Tocci 2008).

The concept of ‘Transformative Power Europe’ (Groen, Niemann; 2011 op.cit) comes as a supplementary to already mentioned concepts, which assess EU’s capacity for transforming political, economic and judicial structures in third countries. However Richer (2009) finds it problematic empirically to distinguish the impact that EU policies can have on third countries from the other international actors involved with a certain country. In addition the Union’s policy transformative capacities, which are often tight mainly to the enlargement platform, are strongly criticised by many scholars. (Grabbe 2006; Börzel 2009).

In the light of given difficulties many scholars decided to deviate from the concept of ‘actorness’ to ‘presence’ (Allen; Smith 1990). Here presence is less notable concept and underlines more the Union’s capability to influence others actions and anticipations while actorness implies the EU’s active functionality on the global arena (Groen; Niemann; 2011 op.cit).

For this study the concept of actorness, however represents bigger interest and suitability, as it remains highly contested concept in several matters in contrast to ‘presence’ that has been taken for granted by scholars.

More detailed focus on the EU foreign policy actions can allow seeing the different features that EU illustrates in different policy matters in the international relations. ‘Traditional characterizations do not sufficiently recognise that EU acts in certain areas in one way and in others in another way; they also fail to discern the emerging tension between distinct foreign policy approaches within EU’ (Barbe and Kienzle; 2007; p520). To overcome this, it will be useful to shift the focus of the research from the general norms and approaches to specific the ‘EU’s interests and actions in a specific foreign policy areas’, to eliminate the existing tension in the foreign policy of EU and shape its dual character as an international actor (Barbe and Kienzle; 2007; ibid).

Chapter 2

2. Methodology

For answering the research question set in this study case study research method will be used.

Case study research method is used for deeper understanding of a given phenomenon. It is used to perform detailed contextual analysis of number of events and conditions and their relationships. Yin defines this method as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used’ (Yin 1984 p 23)

Case study method is often harshly criticised for strict focus on a case creates bias in findings and gives limited possibilities for generalisation. However the method is still widely used by researchers for studying real-life situations and problems.

2.1 Research Strategy

The given study puts on the focus the issue of unresolved frozen ethnic conflicts on the post-Soviet space and the role EU has in the resolution of these conflicts.

The research strategy implies the usage of deductive qualitative approach for theory testing.

A considerable amount of empirical observation based on the case study method illustrate that the given method can be useful for testing competing social theories. While it still had been doubted the effectiveness of the method when it comes using

deductive qualitative research strategy. The main critics refer to the possible ambiguity and bias towards the hypotheses extracted from the theories and the awareness of the researcher about the expecting outcomes by the time of hypothesis extraction (Bitektine A. 2008, 161). However in order to overcome this critic and construct a valid research a ‘prospective case study’ method will be used instead, which utilizes ‘pattern matching’ technique for testing the proposed hypothesis.

In other words the ‘pattern matching’ technique needs creation of a theory-based hypothesis ‘in respect to the evolution of an on-going process and consequently tests it for the predetermined period of time by comparing it with the outcomes’ Bitektine 2008 op.cit).

The process in this way comprises two stages when at the first stage it is required to conduct a ‘baseline’ study, which is decisive also for the determination of ‘crucial study elements’ and propositions. The second stage includes the follow up research that is conducted in order to evaluate the outcomes achieved in respect with the theory-deducted propositions at the first stage of study.

Hence there is a vision that PCS, in case there is a clear formulated set of ‘propositions that serve as ‘documented predictions’ of the upcoming findings, in contrast with the retrospective rationalisations and selection biases, approach can indeed strengthen the rigor and legitimacy of the study outcomes (Bitektine 2008; Campbell 1975).

2.2 Research Design

Here the research design consists of the following steps:

- . *The research question formulation and theoretical framework pick-up*
- . *The formulation of the testable hypothesis based on the theoretical framework*
- . *Selection of cases*
- . *Case analysis*
- . *Outcome evaluation*

So to begin with, one needs well-formulated research question, which determines the direction in which the researcher should move in his inquiry. The better-formulated research question is therefore important for conducting a good quality research.

Hence the research question of this study is:

What can the case of unresolved frozen ethnic conflicts tell us about EU as a security actor?

The study aims to get better understanding about the possible degree of actorness that EU has gained and different factors that are hindering its effectiveness in the given area.

For enhancing the focus of the study and maximising insights get in the end following sub-questions can be posed:

What can the frozen conflicts tell us about overall security concerns in the region?

What are the factors that can constrain the EU's role in the settlement process of these conflicts?

The theoretical section of the study will focus on extracting necessary insights about the concept of the frozen ethnic conflicts and their threats over the regional security

complex will be drawn. The theoretical part of this study takes use of the '***Regional Security Complex Theory***' as a suitable framework for looking through the EU's role in the given conflicts.

Thus the conceptual clarifications drawn in the section 3 are divided as following:

Theoretical framework: Regional Security Complex Theory

Recognition, Actorness and Effectiveness

Ethnic Conflicts: Conceptual clarifications

'Frozen' in relation towards ethnic conflicts

The main hypothesis of this study generated from the conceptual framework above can be formulated as following:

Hypothesis: The frozen ethnic conflicts are part of a security complex other than EU, which determines the degree of actorness that EU can exert across the security complex boundaries over the settlement process of these conflicts.

Thus the main argument of this study revolves around the idea that the frozen ethnic conflicts despite their proximity to the EU continue to be located within a parallel Post-Soviet complex undisputedly dominated by Russia. In this situation EU has more limited capabilities (effective policy instruments) also low degree of coherence (the unresolved state of these conflicts is not prioritised by the Member States as a source of immediate security concern) and opportunities (limited by the presence of other actors with more solid interests, holding control over the dynamics of the conflicts) for increasing its own role within the resolution process of these conflicts. This is supplemented also by a possession of a low degree of 'credible image' in the eyes of conflicting parties.

The research will use a prospective case study method with observation of several cases. Multiple-case study design requires that all cases should be examined separately

as a single case. The researcher has a responsibility to decide upon the case selection, whether it should be selection of most different unique cases or the most typical for the purpose of the study. For this study four cases- four frozen ethnic conflict have been selected: the conflict between Moldova and Transnistria; Georgian conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia; The conflict of Nagorno Karabakh.

Since specific scope for this research is set- i.e. the EU as an actor in the resolution of frozen ethnic conflicts emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union and there are relatively small number of available cases that might be examined (the term frozen has equally been applied to these conflicts, which have had the same outcome – separation from the centre and creation of de-facto independent states). While these four conflicts in many ways have undergone the similar scenario of development and hold similar causal factors, they still have their own specifics, which require further examination and can provide with useful insights for answering the research question posed.

Data Collection

The crucial advantage with using case study research method is the possibility to use variety of sources and techniques when it comes to data collection. Case study method generally implies usage of largely qualitative data though the quantitative tools also can be employed. The explorative study approach involves the combination of multiple data sources. Here the data collection for the selected cases has encompassed multi-angled data collection technique including official documents relevant for the conflicts, public and political statements, special expert group reports, articles and earlier conducted documented interviews and relevant academic literature. The data collection is completed by May 2011.

2.3 Validity And Reliability

For assessing the rigour of the conducted case study there are number of important criteria of validity to be met embedded within the ‘positivist tradition’ (Behling 1980).

These are the criteria of – internal validity, constructed validity and external validity.

Internal validity concerns the causal link between the chosen variables and results. (Yin, 1994). It should be provided with sufficient causal argumentations supporting the findings of the research. For the sake of strengthening the internal validity three measures can be outlined:

Firstly it is necessary to create a lucid framework for the research illustrating the obvious link between the chosen variable and certain outcomes and that those outcomes are not caused by some other third variable.

Secondly, pattern matching should be used comparing thus the studied patterns with the other patterns either predicted or previously studied in a deferent context (Denzin and Lincoln 1994).

And finally, theory triangulation enables the findings verification by multiple perspectives (Yin 1994).

Construct Validity – refers to the measure undertaken in order to enhance the ‘quality of conceptualization and operationalization of the relevant concept’ (Gibbert M. Ruigrok W.; 2008, 1466). Thus ‘construct validity’ refers to the degree that the conducted investigation corresponds to things it has claimed to investigate, and should be observed during the process of data collection (Gibbert M, Ruigrik W, 2008 ibid.). The cautious investigation of reality’ is often undermined with weakly determined measures and ‘subjective judgements’ are used instead. In order to overcome this bias and enhance ‘construct validity’ Yin urges first to create a chain of evidence that will allow the readers to trace the entire way through research question to the outcomes occurred; and secondly, usage of triangulation will allow observing the researched phenomenon from various angles (Yin 1994 op.cit.).

External Validity criterion appears to be more ‘tricky’ for satisfaction within the case study method since its findings does not allow to draw statistical generalisation which does not necessarily preclude the possibility to make analytical generalisations which derives from the observation made within the empirical data and refers to ‘theory rather than to a population’ (Gibbert M. Rigrik W.; 2008).

Addressing the issue reliability of the study - i.e. absence of a random error and that the study can yield the same results if conducted similarly by other researchers in future (Yin 1994)- For avoiding a random error the measures of transparency and replication are suggested. The first implies the creation of a ‘study protocol’ that will clearly illustrate all the procedures taken within the scope of the study, while the replication draws on the need to have a ‘case study database’, which will include the storage of case study documents and notes that can facilitate to the future study replication (Yin1994).

Moreover reliability alongside with other three criteria of validity are greatly interdependent.

Chapter 3

3. Theoretical framework

This section of the study puts the focus on the conceptualisation of the ‘Frozen’ Ethnic Conflicts as a source of security concerns on the regional dimension. It also aims for finding a corresponding conceptual framework for the researched phenomenon.

3.1 Regional security Complexes

When studying security one inevitably comes up with its ‘relational nature’. It is not just a mere composition of internal capabilities, aspirations and concerns of separate countries, rather capabilities, aspirations and concerns of other states, which they interact with. Therefore, any idea of national security can be viewed in the context of security interdependence within the entire international security system. (Ohlsson, 1989; 3). However the complicated nature of the entire international security pattern makes it necessary to get some sort of hierarchical levelling of this system where every level represents itself ‘durable, significant and substantially self-contained features of security problem’ (Ohlsson 1989, op.cit. 3-5). If one might imagine a hierarchical pattern, then the level in the bottom would represent the individual state, while on the top is the global security architecture.

Hence the idea of conducting a security discussion on the regional level is most prominently supported by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever (2003). In a global world where the borders of interstate and intrastate conflicts are rather blurred the cross border effects becomes inevitable. Thus the essence of their concept ‘regional security complex theory’ spins around the idea that ‘most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, and security interdependence is normally patterned into

regionally based clusters: security complexes' (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 4). It can be defined 'durable patterns of amity and enmity taking the form of sub-global, geographically coherent patterns of security interdependence' (p. 45) Bengtsson 2008 op.cit.). Thus, the spill over effects and involvement of the regional players into the conflict is inherent to various conflicts – meaning that these conflicts are inevitably 'regionalised. So the regional implications of conflicts in a great extent depend on 'the nature of the security complex and the ways in which security problems are vertically and horizontally linked in particular regions, which can vary markedly' (M. Schulz and F. Soderbaum; 2010; 362). Some of the conflicts erupt in a result of ethnic struggle among ethnic groups or cross-border rivalry for the control over limited territorial or natural resources, while the regional inward impact takes the form of diplomatic measures and military actions aimed at conflict prevention and resolution by the regional actors (Bengtsson 2008, M. Schulz and F. Soderbaum 2010 op.cit.; 362-3).

As Bengtsson notes that despite the concept roots from the realist views about the 'international anarchy' and vitality of territorial and material power, still it bears some constructivist points as well (Bengtsson 2008,op.cit. 599). As prove for that point he mentions that security issues become such because of the agenda-setting actors who view them crucial for the security. Moreover the role of regions as socially constructed result also from the security actions of its actors (Bengtsson 2008, ibid).

The constructivist logics stems also from the Adler (2006) views of regional security construction based on collective identities of the actors who practice security in cooperation (Bengtsson 2008 Adler, Crawford, 2006, 15). Buzan And Waever outline number of models of these security complexes such as 'conflict formation', 'security regime' – i.e. mixture of conflict and cooperation within the complex, security community where the rejection of military means is viewed crucial in conflict resolution (Buzan Waever 2003 op.cit).

In order to get better understanding of the logic of interactions among the actors within and across security complexes, Bengtsson puts forward the idea of 'interfaces', which implies that the behaviour of the actors towards each other depends on their domestic

developments as well as actors each other external perceptions (Bengtsson 2008, op.cit, 602).

He argues that ‘self-image and the perception of the other actors as well as the context of interaction’ are crucial for the interface construction. This implies the variety of the possible interactions among the actors from ‘hostile other; different other, transient other which leads to creation of hostility (with limited interaction), equality and inferiority (more extensive interaction with different rationale) Bengtsson 2008, 602; Bjørn Møller, 2005 41).

In the light of the abovementioned reasoning, EU becomes an interesting example for investigation. In this regard, it will be noteworthy to view the interaction of the EU with its neighbouring countries that are located in a geographic proximity to the Community (this relates first of all to the post Soviet East-European and Caucasian countries who at the same time are still parts of Post-Soviet security complex greatly dominated by Russia, though in the perspective can be included in the EU security complex. Here Buzan argues that Russia and EU do not comprise a single regional security complex, but rather a ‘supercomplex with distinct logics and features (Bengtsson 2008, Buzan Waever 2003, 343-4). Despite the differences in logics of two security complexes their geographical proximity makes EU to step across the complex to prevent any spill over threats that stem from unresolved conflicts and vulnerable peace.

3.2 Recognition, Actorness Effectiveness Conceptual: framework

The framework presented above can serve as a fruitful base for the analysis of the EU actorness in the frozen ethnic conflicts on the Post-Soviet space. However, for getting the full picture of the framework suggested one has to look upon the concepts of *recognition* and *actorness*.

Recognition

The concept of *recognition* goes hand in hand with the given concept as an inherent part of the actors with and across the security complex. It implies the ‘identification of the actor by the others’ which as Bengtsson argues, bears ‘subjective elements’ that stem from factors like ‘general world view; self-image etc. (Bengtsson 2008, op.cit. 603). Recognition can maximise the expectations of the others towards the actors and grant more space for drift. In this regard Bengtsson views the EU recognition as a great power in the eyes of other regional actors, which increases the status and consequently expectations from EU as a great power (Bengtsson 2006, ibid).

Subsequently the recognition of the actor inevitably leads to the expectations of its *actorness* capacities.

Actorness

Here the *actorness* – the ability for action ‘in relation to other actors in the international system which generates influence but not necessarily lead to effectiveness. (Bengtsson 2008 op.cit., Jupille, Caporaso, 1998, 214). Hence it can be viewed in the light of external expectations combined with its inner capacities to act. Moreover, one cannot abstract from the external expectations and have heavy stress only on the development of the actor’s inner capabilities for action; the external evaluation of these developments is crucial for actor’s recognition. In this regard probably it will be worth considering EU as a ‘hybrid and ambiguous entity’, which is in a state of progress and development of its actorness capacities as well as external expectations (Bengtsson 208 op.cit.).

Barnett and Duvall argue that actorness always deals with the idea of ‘power’. Thus they outline different forms of power;

Compulsory, with direct intense control of one actor over another,

Institutional, with indirect control by means of created formal and informal

settings;

Structural power with the direct structural positioning of two actors; the position of one actor is determined by the position of the other);

Productive power with discursive processes and practices that give social meaning to subjects and shape conceptions of what is desirable and normal (Barnett Duval, 2005 10-23, Bengtsson 2008, 603-4).

**For understanding the EU as an actor, with its *sui generis* nature in mind Bretherton and Vogler highlight three important dimensions:
Opportunity, Presence, Capability.**

First dimension – opportunity focuses on the set of ‘external events and ideas’ that can affect the Union’s actorness in one or another way (Bretherton, Vogler; 2006, 24). Thus external context plays important role for EU’s actions. In this matter any changes in the dynamics of the frozen conflicts can increase opportunity for EU to act actively. For instance this kind of change was the crisis between Russia and Georgia in august 2008. Then EU was recognised by the conflicting parties as a legitimate impartial actor in broking ceasefire and putting the resolution back on the diplomatic track.

Secondly, Bretherton and Vogler go into the dimension of ‘presence, which means EU’s ability by virtue of its existence to exert influence beyond its borders’ (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006,op.cit. 27).

The third dimension mentioned is ‘capability’, which in its turn is divided into different sub-dimensions: ‘shared commitment to a set of overarching values; domestic legitimization of decision processes and priorities related to external policy matters; policy formulation ability comprise the third sub-dimension of capability; and fourthly, the ability for political instruments utilization adds on EU’s capability as an actor (Bretherton and Vogler; 2006, op.cit. 29).

One more point worth mentioning in this context is probably the expectation-capability gap that was standing as long-lasting point for criticism of the Union's external actions, especially in the cases of conflict management (Hill C. 2001).

So any discussion about narrowing this gap the degree of autonomy and policy cohesion on the supranational level always pop up as being crucial.

And indeed, the previous experience with crisis management showed the lack of autonomy on the supranational level as well as policy cohesion, which by no means strengthened the Union's image as a foreign policy actor.

Jupille; Caporaso (op.cit.1998) also emphasise cohesion and autonomy as a crucial that strengthens EU's capabilities. Those criteria are not considered as absolute and imply that actorness can vary in degree (Jupille; Caporaso 1998 Jupille, J. and J.A. Caporaso, 1998, 213-229 in Groen L. and A. Nieman 2011). Cohesion implies that active behaviour of the EU depends greatly on its ability to unify preferences and push ahead common policies.

Moreover it is possible to draw different necessary angles comprising the policy cohesion on the supranational level, which also mostly goes hand in hand with the sub-dimensional model suggested by Bretherton and Vogler.

Firstly there should be cohesion of the preferences of the MS regarding the matter of frozen ethnic conflicts in their neighbourhood. Secondly, it is important to gain ability to overcome existing preferential disparities and disagreements. It widely utilizes the created tactical leverages within the negotiating process.

Output cohesion: this relates whether the EU as a whole succeed in formulating common policies and positions, regardless of substantive and procedural agreement. (Thus output cohesion can largely be viewed as the result of preference cohesion mitigated/balanced by procedural-tactical cohesion), and whether the various EU actors comply with the policy that has been agreed (Neiman 2011, op.cit.)

The degree of autonomy that EU can get from its Member States is also important for understanding the Union's effectiveness as an independent actor. Neiman (2011) comes up with number of elements that comprise the concept of EU autonomy. Firstly, the distinctiveness of the Union's representative model raises some interest. In that regard, it's worth looking whether the EU has a distinct representation in the process of resolution for the four ethnic conflicts chosen in this study and the 'genuine EU agent influence on the conflict resolution, and the level of discretion that the EU agent can get? Therefore the look-up on the institutional setting of EU regarding its role in the frozen conflicts will shed light on the degree of autonomy that EU has gained from its Members for action.

Acting Effectively.

Additionally, in order to be able to get better ideas about the EU efforts in the hard cases of frozen conflict resolution we should beyond the actorness take into consideration the effectiveness of such efforts. In this regard effectiveness is perceived as goal achievement (Young, O.R. 1994 in Groen L. and A. Nieman 2011 op.cit.) Nieman also argues that actorness deals more with the inner dimension of EU where it generates capacity for acting while effectiveness indicates whether the action creates any impact on the subsequent outcomes. Thus the transfer of the actorness into effectiveness in a great extent depends also on the 'opportunity structure', outside events that might foster or hinder the action (Bretherton and Vogler 2006 op.cit. 24). The external environment, objectives and interests of the other actors can have direct effect on the degree of effectiveness of the EU's actions.

3.3 Frozen Ethnic Conflicts: Concept Clarification

On the focus of this study are the four ethnic conflicts that broke out after the desolation of the Soviet Union in 1991. In order to get better insights and be able to

answer the research question formulated in this study, further clarification of the phenomenon of ethnic conflicts are necessary.

The concept of ethnic conflicts that have rights and interests of certain ethnic groups stands in line with other forms of various intragroup conflicts (political- for the power, domination and influence; social – between the labour and capital) and most often do not exist in its pure form but entwined with those other forms of conflicts.

In this regard almost all the conflicts present on the Post-Soviet space can be categories as ‘ethnic’ (Tishkov 1997: 304).

The definitional classification of ethnic conflicts is varied. Given also the variety of the goals and objectives pursued by the conflicting parties, causal factors can be summarised as following:

Socio-economic reasons, when demands of equal civil and economic rights are emphasised.

Cultural-lingual – which has the rights of cultural and lingual preservation of a certain ethnic group.

Political – when certain ethnic minorities pursue higher degree of political rights

Territorial – demands of change of existing borders of one state by means either of annexation of the disputed territory to another state, which is considered to be in close link from historico-cultural perspective or creation of totally new independent state.

Tishkov defines ethnic conflicts in any forms of civil, political or military struggle, where one or many sides of the conflict mobilise and act on the ground of their ethnic differences (Tishkov, 1997 op.cit. 476).

From the point of psychologists who observe the dynamics of the conflicts, the existence of contradictions itself between the groups whose goals in the struggle for

limited resources (territory, power, prestige) appear to be too different and incompatible is only one stage of the conflict – that is used to be named as an objective ‘conflicting stage’ (Soldatova 1998; 10-24).

This stage of conflict is usual and apparent in most of the parts of the world and in most cases such conflictual tensions arise between the dominant ethnic group and the ethnic minority group. However these tensions not necessarily always have to turn into an active phase of the conflict. In the cases when the conflicts remain in their quiet ‘simmering’ condition, most often elements of tensions between the conflicting groups find their expression through different forms of ‘social competition’(Soldatova 1998 op.cit). It is worth noting that even though the existing social contradictions play certain decisive role among the reasons for ‘conflicting actions’, however have no direct link in-between. The conflicting actions occur in case when the conflicting parties have realised the incompatibility of their interests and have appropriate motivation of such behaviour (Ohlsson Th. 1998).

Once experienced ‘historical injustice’ creates for low-statused ethnic groups desire to restore the ‘justice’, which does not necessarily lead to direct reaction but requires years of ethnic consolidation around the idea of revenge. Moreover, the open phase of conflict most often arises in the situations when minority ethnic group concerned realises not only the illegitimacy but also instability of the intragroup relations (Tishkov, 1997 op.cit). The instable situation was the strongest trigger for the outbreak of numerous ethnic conflicts during the collapse of the Soviet Union - conflicts that were simmering during the decades of soviet dominance.

In the open phase of conflictual actions the ethnic conflicts have tendency for escalation, which implies that the parties move from ‘soft’ tactics towards ‘hard’ ones., as it happened in all four conflicts chosen for this study.

Thus, we see ‘ethnic conflicts’ as any form of competition between groups from social up to open phase of violence when the perception of the ‘others’ is determined based on ethnic belonging.

The inclusion of ‘social competition’ makes the definition more complex because it analyses the cognitive and motivational processes that most often precede to the next

stage of confrontation and violence have impact on the further escalation and go on even long after the completion confrontational stage (Tishkov 1997, op.cit.).

Thus all the abovementioned elements are discernable within the ethnic confrontations that occurred in the aftermath of the Soviet Union.

3.4 Freezing the conflicts

The term ‘frozen’ is often applied to the existing ethnic conflicts over the Black Sea-South Caucasian region. Other interchangeable terminologies among others are ‘unsolved, protracted, stagnant, enduring, gridlocked or prolonged conflicts. Most often the term ‘frozen’ can often be misleading. In words of Morar ‘; it erroneously suggests that a conflict could be put on hold as one could press the pause button of a remote control’ (Morar F. 2010). However, the ambiguous status of the disputed territories and unacceptability of the status quo for the parties bears the risk of sudden ‘defrost’ of these conflicts and eruption of new wave of violence on the ground.

As Morar argues thus the term ‘frozen conflicts encapsulates the very essence of the unfortunate stereotypical approach to unsolved conflicts (Morar F. 2010, op.cit.). So the conflicts are postponed in the ‘freezer’ until the rigid solution will be found. However, this perception overlooks the fact that frozen conflict constantly generate new outcomes and realities that casts any prospect of reconciliation even farther away from the parties.

As it already has been mentioned four frozen conflicts over the Black Sea – South Caucasian realm, despite own specifics, share identical features and have undergone through similar pattern of escalation, when the collapse of Soviet Union triggered enormous wave of violence and hostility and eventual secession of the breakaway regions from the centre, that holds up to now.

In the same fashion Lynch challenges three conventional wisdoms that have long existed within the frozen ethnic conflicts:

First, similar to many others he finds the term ‘frozen’ applied to these conflicts misleading. He argues that the term rests upon the ‘ceasefire-fixed’ status quo that remains since mid 1990s, while in reality they continue develop dynamically and the state of things 15 years ago and now is cardinally different.

Secondly, the conventional ideas that the peace has been possible thanks to the mechanisms emerged after the brokered ceasefires in 1990s (JCC and CIS peacekeeping operations in South Ossetia and Transnistria). These mechanisms more deliberately will be analysed in the next section of the study, but already on this stage it becomes possible to state the ineffectiveness of these mechanisms.

Thirdly, It has been long misleadingly considered that the international community should abstain from supporting the secessionist regions. However the time has showed that the policy of ‘blindly’ supporting the territorial integrity principle in these conflicts and continuous economic blockade has yielded little results so far.

All in all, the settlement of these conflicts appeared to be ‘a hard nut to crack’ for the international community. As Lynch sees the conflicts are ‘intra-state but have an inter-state dimension, opposing a legally recognised state to an unrecognised self-declared ‘state’. In such a situation, the negotiating format and peacekeeping operations that have implemented so far were in a great extent aimed at preserving the current status quo (Lynch D. 2006).

Treading the path of resolution: What to be done?

The first pivotal feature that all these conflicts have in common is the strong distrust among the conflicting parties that explains in a great extent the unwillingness for compromise. The isolationist policies against the breakaway entities and constant internal propaganda over the time only strengthen the existing gap and distrust among

the conflicting ethnic groups. In that regard Morar finds useful for the external actors/mediators to establish constant links of interaction with the population and political leadership of the concerned entities. This in turn will help them to acquire necessary leverages for achieving acceptable resolution for the parties (Morar F. 2010 op.cit.).

Moreover the willingness for the constructive engagement of the external actors/mediators is of utmost importance. First of all that relates to Russia whose role in all these conflicts was and remain prominent. In this regard the role of other actors (EU, OSCE, UN) becomes more significant as their task is to establish certain advantageous environment that will encourage to the conflicting sides as well as the ‘protector state’ (Russia) to eject ‘multifaceted solutions from different centres’ (Morar F. 2010 op.cit Lynch D. 2005 op.cit.). Thus, this implies that various regional and international organisations interested in the durable resolution have to activate in different dimensions: activation of contacts with the conflicting parties; conditional economic assistance combined with political pressure. External actors in that why have to escape the illusion that self-isolation and the solution-protraction for a later date can be considered as effective approach.

Hence at any sort of contemplation about the image that the external mediators/contributors have to take, number of crucial features can certainly arise:

The external actors who get engaged in the frozen conflict resolution should have no expectations of ‘fame and glory’. As Morar sees ‘external actors who could play a role in obtaining a settlement, the intricate protracted conflicts pose the challenge of investing time and resources without high likelihood of extracting international credit easily convertible in domestic political capital’ (Morar F. 2010 op.cit.). Moreover, dealing with protracted conflicts seems less ‘spectacular and impressive’ than immediate preventive actions during the sudden crisis eruption.

In that regard international organisations/entities (such as EU) that can get free from rhetorical manifestations can assume greater and more significant role in the conflict settlement Their main security concerns are more rigid than mere short-term gains the state-actors try to exert from their presence in the settlement mediation.

For long external engagement in the frozen conflict settlement has been obstacle greatly by hesitations and insurmountable dilemmas that have prevailed over the last 20 years of conflicts. Mostly this relates to the hesitation or even unwillingness of the external mediators to establish contacts and dialogues with the de jure unrecognised secessionist entities. The dilemma of inclusion of the secessionist entities in the settlement process versus the reservation from their de facto recognition led the external mediators and the protector states (like Armenia after 1998) to drive the policy of isolation of these entities from the whole process. However these entities got governmental representation have been present during the last two decades and most likely will not disappear in the near future so it should make the external mediators if not to recognise them de jure but at least accept their presence and existence. It will help to intensify the contacts with the civil society, which will in turn help to overcome the existing deadlock(Morar; 2010 op.cit..

Thus this section has put in to the focus the clarification of the term ‘frozen’ that is applied to four ethnic secessionist conflicts existing over the Black Sea-South Caucasian region.

It has been noted that the term frozen is applied to describe the stalemate that has due to various factors prevailed over the last 20 years, when the solution is postponed for the future to avoid any escalation that can easily ignite again. It has been noted that the frozen state of conflicts is underpinned by the standpoint of the protector state that views the protraction of the conflict as a strong leverage for its influence.

In that relation position of the other external actors interested in the conflict resolution thus becomes very sensitive. For long their policies very featured with hesitations and unwillingness to intensify contacts with the separatist entities preferring the policy of isolation, which has proven to be ineffective during the last 20 years. The step towards ceasing to ignore the existence of the separatist governments but intensification of contacts and assistance will not necessarily account for their de jure recognition while will help to push forward the frozen state of things.

As I has been noted despite the rising actuality for the EU to be more actively engaged in the settlement processes, it still has limited resources and space for drift in its near

abroad. However it increases efforts in both political settlement process as well as in economic assistance and development projects most notably within the neighbourhood policy framework.

These efforts will be examined in the next section of the study in relation to all four frozen conflicts.

Chapter 4

4. Case studies: Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh.

This section of the study will have more detailed focus on the analysis of the collected data about the role EU plays in the four frozen conflicts on the Post-Soviet arena.

Before the actual analysis of the EU's efforts within the process of conflict settlement, we will start with looking at the Union's internal potential for engagement as well as the background of each conflict, the arguments of all parties and the development dynamics.

4.1 EU in the resolution of frozen conflicts

Tackling internal shortcomings

As it already been noted, the total passivity of the EU as a mediator in the period of conflicts outrage in early 90s has received a relative offset during the last decade, when even though in most cases the 'declarative voice' has resonated on the global arena. Probably the security strategy of the EU was one of the most prominent signals over the Union's transformation into the entity that is ready not only to maintain its own security but also to take responsibility and face those challenges that waits the entire international community. From the security strategy one specifically reads:

'As a union of 25 states with over 450 million people producing a quarter of the world's Gross National Product (GNP), the European Union is inevitably a global player... it should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world' (EU Security Strategy 2003; 1)

And first of all one may refer to one of the utmost challenges and concerns regarding the threat of unresolved ethnic conflicts in its eastern neighbourhood that received a priority status in the adopted security strategy.

On the other side the rethinking of its own role in the security matters especially in its neighbourhood was the result of number of factors that occurred during that period of time.

Firstly several countries in the region affected by the conflicts inclined to more deep collaboration with the EU, thus making for the community easier to find path of reapproachment with them (the revolutions in Georgia Moldova and Ukraine). Moreover, as it had been noted earlier, successful completion of two enlargements in 2004 and 2007 brought the Union's external borders near to the conflicting zones. Moreover, the concerns over its own energetic security and the dependence on Russia served as additional incentives for EU to deal with the long lasting conflicts in a substantially new way (Ora; 2006; 2-3).

The involvement of many international organisations and regional states (UN, OSCE, Russia US, Turkey and Iran) makes the space for engagement already too narrow and requires genuinely distinct approach from any 'newcomer' into the settlement process. In this regard Ora finds that EU's distinctiveness is underpinned by the possession of various mechanisms and instruments varying from the political authority for pushing the agreements for the settlement till 'coherent and structured approach in boosting the post-conflict rehabilitation through the day-to-day support for improving the situation in the conflict zones (Ora 2006; ibid.).

In the previous section of the study it has been determined that in order to exercise actorness the EU needs accumulation of its internal resources - strong policy cohesion. In that regard one should look upon the institutional set-up of the Union called for successful implementation of the policy with the pillar of the foreign affairs.

So the existence of an amount of discrepancies and incoherence within the foreign policy actions of the EU thus can be explained by still high degree of reluctance of the Member States to give up these competences in favour of supranational cohesion. The

CFSP has been long regarded as the weakest of all pillars of European integration remaining greatly the realm of MS domination. This consequently also affects the matters of conflict resolution of the European foreign policy agenda and the achievement of some coherence in this is crucial for the Union's engagement abroad. As it looks from now, EU is still in the mid of its way for developing a sound and coherent strategy capable tackling the impasses of unresolved conflicts. Thus the formation of a coherent and comprehensive 'Eastern Neighbourhood Conflict Prevention and Resolution Strategy which is integrated and mainstreamed into all aspects of external relations' policy' is essential for the effective engagement (Bardakçı M.; 2010). The institutional hardships are aggravated further with the inconsistencies and lack of coordination. The rotating presidency leaves few chances on the constant pursuit of the set goals regarding the conflict resolution since each period of presidency is characterised by different policy priorities (Bardakçı M.; op.cit.).

Moreover EU experiences credibility difficulties on the regional level. The fact that there is no membership perspective for the conflicted states, hits hard on the effectiveness of the Union's policies pursued in its eastern neighbourhood and there is no clear vision about how this impasse could be overcome.

The image problem that EU still experiences in the Post Soviet region puts its mediation efforts even more hardshipened and limited. The conflicted parties see Russia or United States more credible and influential actors for the settlement process. By contrast, as Bardakçı argues that EU is perceived as 'being more expert at providing technical assistance, launching capacity building projects, and reading sermons of good behaviour.'(Bardakçı M., op.cit. Lynch D. 2006, op.cit.).

However when looking in a longer time perspective, it should be noted enormous degree of strengthening of the abovementioned shortcomings. With the treaty of the Amsterdam up till date the EU has undergone dramatic evolution claiming the title of the new global power. Similarly during these decades CFSDP raised as solid incarnation of the new actors ambitions. Undoubtedly the significance of the CFSDP has increased gradually with each new treaty adopted but does it allow us to state that the EU is well equipped for the cases of crisis management in its near abroad?

Seeing the EU treaties as the main ground for that discussion we look on the latest the treaty of Lisbon, which yielded unprecedented supranational capacities for the CFSDP. The treaty of Lisbon signed by the Member States in December 2007 and eventually adopted after long lasting ratification process in 2009 came as an amendment to the existing treaties, which was critical after two enlargements and the rejection of the constitution by France and Netherlands.

Already the preamble of the treaty gives clear signal to the international community that the new treaty comes to strengthen the EU's role on the global arena. It particularly states that '*to complete the process started by the Treaty of Amsterdam and by the Treaty of Nice with a view to enhancing the efficiency and democratic legitimacy of the Union and to improving the coherence of its action*' (*The treaty Of Lisbon, Preamble*).

The expansion of the competences and the elimination of the pillar-structure in favour of the unified EU indeed makes value-added contribution to the cohesiveness of the Unions external policies (Blackmon, Wessel; 2009; 268). This was also supplemented by the fact that hereafter the EU would obtain a long-waited legal personality (The Treaty Of Lisbon, art. 7).

Regarding the modification within the CFSDP its worth to mention the upgrade of the High Representative for CFSP position into the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Defence Policy with Baroness Katherine Aston assumed the office which signifies the representation of the Union as a whole entity.

However the fact of triangle representation of the Union by Commission the rotating president of the Council and HR leaves the state of things still complicated. In this regard lots of things will depend on the coordination of the HR with the president of Council who will be engaged in the issues related Union's foreign policy (Blockmans, Wessel op.cit).

One more significant aspect related to the issues of conflict management and peace building that was made in the new treaty is the extension of capacities within the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) by upgrading the 'Petersberg tasks' with renewed concept of 'collective defence obligation' (Blockman, Wessel; op.cit.). This consequently gives more room for manoeuvre as also a capable military actor via

'Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Defence Agency (Blockman, Wessel; *ibid.*).

However it can also be noted that many changes in this regard at the first sight appear to be just of cosmetic significance and in practice have power for little change in the operation of CFSDP unless the EU managed to elaborate a cautious strategic approach to the peace-building process. As Major and Molling argue 'such a strategy would seek to overcome both the conceptual diversity and the institutional fragmentation in view of coordinating diverse instruments, providing for the appropriate resources and capabilities and assuring their implementation' (Claudia Major and Christian Molling European Parliament 2010).

4.2 The conflict Background: Moldova – Transnistria

In this part of the study more specific focus will be drawn on the chosen cases and the role EU has played so far in their settlement process bearing in mind the abovementioned considerations from the previous section.

The conflict between Moldova and Transnistria is one of many ethnic-territorial disputes that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As it has been noted earlier various ethnic-territorial conflicts often stem from geopolitical, economical or environmental incentives. The case of Transnistria conflict is not an exception.

Similar to other secessionist entities in the aftermath of the Soviet Union Transnistria became a self-declared Republic, which is recognised by the international community as the part of Moldovan Republic. However the region remains de facto independent already the second decade since 1991 and heavily relies first of all the aid from Russia. The continuous ceasefire regime and the ruling stalemate in the settlement have put the Transnistrian conflict in the range of 'frozen conflicts'.

As it often happens many territorial conflicts emerge as a result of unclear formulations within the treaties of border demarcation, which historically yielded ground for Transnistria of more loose interpretation and claims for ‘special political status’ (Transnistria in the free dictionary encyclopaedia)

Historical Overview and the conflict escalation:

The region that has been granted autonomy in 1918 within Ukrainian Directory and later included in the Ukrainian SSR and Moldovan ASSR after the creation of Soviet Union has undergone decades of systematic policies aimed at the demographic corrections by means of extensive ‘Russification’(Transnistria in the Free Dictionary encyclopedia, ibid.). Moreover the industrialisation and the hefty economic development programmes were concentrated mostly on the Transnistrian part while the rest of Moldovan SSR was mainly undeveloped agricultural land. The presence of the 14th Soviet army base with heavy ammunition was viewed as a guaranty of the regions security even after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Transnistrian Conflict: Origins and Main issues; 1994).

Similar to other parts of the Soviet Empire the policy of ‘Glasnost’ (Openness), launched by Mikhail Gorbachov in the mid 80s triggered strong nationalistic moods frustrating thus existing national minorities. The long lasting political domination of non-Moldovans has been shifted by the new political order created by the nationalist groups, where the obligatory Moldovan language laws considered by many to be the most ‘volatile’ issue that triggered huge amount of those dissatisfied since the huge part of the population by then could not speak any Moldovan at all (Transnistrian Conflict op.cit.).

Thus in the situation of rising instability in the country the independence of the Moldovan Republic of Transnistria was declared in 1990, and consequently on the august 25th 1991 the official declaration of independence of Moldova was adopted by the parliament which implied the inclusion of Transnistria within the territory of the new Moldovan state. This was followed by the request from the parliament towards the USSR government to start the discussion’s of the timeline for the withdrawal of the

Soviet troops from Transnistria which now was declared to be the part of sovereign state of Moldova.

It is worth to mention that the adoption of the Republic of Moldova to the United Nations in 1992 within the boundaries including Transnistria has become the first sound gesture from the international community pointed at supporting the principle of territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova and that any possible settlement of the conflicts inevitably should happen within first of all that principle (Transnistrian Conflict, Origins and Main Issues, op.cit.). This fact also served for the Moldovan political leadership to launch the military operation aimed at oppression of the formed rebel groups who in turn were getting significant support from the Russian 14th army located in the region. Namely it was Russia who played significant role during the entire period of the violent phase of the conflict and the ceasefire brokered between the parties was greatly initiated by Kremlin (Vahl M., 2005).

This leaves us on the point that the main interested party who benefited greatly from the conflict was actually Russia who preserved its political and military influence in the region.

Such a standpoint is greatly promoted by the official Moldovan side, which believes that in the big geopolitical game initiated by the Russia, Moldova has almost no influence. Moreover, numerous illegal entrepreneurs who are conducting illegal trade, handle enormous degree of corruption on the customs check-points are believed to have little interest in the fast settlement of the conflict (Goodhand, J.; 2005)

The moods in Transnistria itself are also far from desired unity. Certain groups still insist on the necessity of retaining the existing status quo, which is countered by various civil society activists who advocate for the political settlement within the boundaries of the current Republic of Moldova.

However, it should be noted that aside from the Russian Federation who appeared to be the biggest external actor benefiting from the status quo there are number of other actors who have peruse certain interests, and first of all see the possibility of any re-

eruption of the hostilities as a direct strike on their interests. This relates first of all neighbouring Ukraine and Romania who during the last decade undergone drastic policy shift towards the integration with the West (Romania even got EU membership in 2007 thus approaching the EU's external borders closer to the conflict zone). For these countries any new phase of violence will mean new waves of refugees that will become an additional burden upon the existing socio-economic hardships in these countries. (Vahl M, 2005). The United States as the superpower obviously has its voice in the conflict and strongly supports the idea of the creation of a federal state, which first of all will help to eliminate existing system of double taxation, which hinders foreign direct investments (FDI). Moreover as a super power it is out of interest for the United States to see the Russian military presence in the area. (Delgado T. 2005).

The abovementioned was an overall description of the specifics of the conflicts, which are considered to be necessary for analysing the EU's engagement later in this section.

4.2.1 The EU in the resolution of the conflict in Transnistria.

EU got a dashing start already in 2004 by intensifying its diplomatic engagement in the settlement process. Since then EU has launched regular diplomatic contacts with the Moldovan authorities as well as frequented discussions on the prospects of the settlement with Russian and Ukrainian colleagues. Eventually EU has expressed its dissatisfaction with the 'Kozak Memorandum' the settlement plan projected by the Russian side (Popescu A.; 2011; 46). Later in 2005 the European Commission office was grounded in the Moldovan capital and a EU Special Representative was appointed - Adriaan Jacobovits de Szeged as a head of the mission who was already well familiar with the problem via his previous employment as a 'special envoy of the Dutch Chairman-in-Office in 2003 (Popescu N. 7). As the main purpose for the mission one namely reads '***His mandate is to 'strengthen the EU contribution to the resolution of***

the Transnistria conflict; assist in the preparation of EU contributions to the implementation of an eventual conflict settlement’. (Council Joint Action 2005/265/CFSP; 2005). This has been more less the first serious signal from the EU about its prioritisation of the Transnistria conflict settlement on the EU foreign policy agenda.

Moreover the efforts set forth for the conflict settlement, were not confined only to mere diplomatic efforts and political consultation with other crucial actors, but more extended towards the problems with trade and customs handling in the conflicted zone. Already in 2004 Moldova managed to get approval from the EU on the exporting of steel in an unlimited amount. The double-checking system introduced for the exports were aimed at more transparent exporting into the EU market. All the exports had to have clear certification from the Moldovan side indicating the origin of the steel-for-export (Council Decision 2004, 11511/04). This in practice meant that the steel factory located on the territory of Transnistria could not get export license without the relevant certification from the Moldovan side. This was also followed by the invitation from the Ukrainian and Moldovan sides to deploy a border assistance mission that had monitoring functions over the whole length of the Ukrainian-Moldovan border. The mission has been deployed since 2005 for the initial period of 2 years with a preliminary value of 22million euros, and possibility for the subsequent prolongation. The mission functioning on all border cross and is a European Commission led operation which is still very unique in its essence from what EU has done elsewhere. The EU’s initiatives within various policy areas has received big resonance particularly among several Member States who have expressed their preparedness to put greater contribution for increasing the EU’s involvement on the ground.

However it is worth to note that the last statistical date from 2010 show some increase of smuggling cases over the entire borderline from 2189 till 2677 as of 2010 (EU-BAM Progress Report 2005- 2010). The drop in effectiveness can probably be partly explained by the fact that the contacts with the Transnistrian local government and the civil society organisations remains quite weak, and in certain areas need for further intensification in order to be able to overcome current stalemate within the settlement.

Various sanctions were another type of leverages that EU has applied for achieving any visible progress in the conflict resolution. However it should be noted that the travel bans introduced in 2003 for number of Transnistrian officials have had little effect so far in a great extent due to the fact that those sanctions imposed have not targeted the officials and business circles that serve as the real supporters of the separatist regime in Transnistria (Council decisions 2003; 6679/03).

Without disregarding the significance of the reform progress, it should be noted that the reasons behind the settlement deadlock lie on the political dimension. This forced EU to seek for more possibility to be directly engaged in the mediation efforts which was finally resulted in its informal entry into the negotiation process with Transnistria already in late 2005 alongside with USA reshaping thus the mediating format into 5+2. (Ora: 2006; 7). Thus Moldova becomes the single frozen conflict where EU managed to get more less some influence upon the settlement format. The main efforts in that direction EU alongside with OSCE puts for managing to resume the disrupted negotiations within the conflicting parties

Also, weak political motivation can be partly explained by the unwillingness of the Kremlin to get any breakthrough in the settlement process that in turn raises deep concerns from EU's side (Ferrero-Waldner B, Frozen conflicts': Transnistria, South Ossetia and the Russian-Georgian dispute 2006).

Moreover, the current status quo with the peacekeeping format seems to be highly unsatisfactory for the EU who tries to push forward alternative frameworks for more effective peacekeeping mission that meets the new realities. These concerns have already been raised since 2003. The possibility of the EU engagement in the security missions was discussed in the special report prepared by the OSCE (Food-for-Thought-Paper: Peace Consolidation Mission Moldova, July 2003) which has later been discussed already with the framework of EU Political and Security Committee which has been wrapped up meeting strong opposition form the Russian side which does not however mean that EU will not keep on bringing up this question again in the future. New mission is supposed to have in focus strengthened efforts in creating atmosphere of trust between two parties. As Ora notes the most important with planning of such a

mission is that it should derive from the overall logic of the political negotiation process, claiming to be the first successful collaboration in the conflict management between the EU and Russia (Ora J. op.cit.).

4.3 South Caucasus

Region Background:

The region, which till recent was in the space of former USSR has now grown into somewhat a crossing point for various geopolitical and economic interests for various regional and global actors. In contrast to the other areas of former Soviet Union (SU) the Caucasus is characterised by its high level of heterogeneity. It remains unintegrated in political legal and socio-economic terms (Ismailov E. Papava 2008; 283).

The fragmented nature of the region with its multidimensionality, importance of its hydrocarbon resources, its location as an important corridor for transportation of the energy resources from the Central Asia made the region of high interest for the external actors such as primarily Russia United States Turkey and Iran along with some European countries.

In this regard, probably the central for describing the situation in the region is the variety of the relations of the newly independent republics with Russia who remains the most influential actor on most part of the post soviet space and unresolved status quo in this conflicts is believed to remain the strongest leverage for Kremlin to keep its influence over its former periphery, that even now despite the collapse of the Soviet Union viewed as the sphere of vital interests of Russia (Cohen J.; 2002).

This factor should be considered as crucial in the view of any possibility of an external actors entry into the regional affairs. Ismailov (op.cit.) names it as a ‘replacement of a big brother’.

Thus the complexity of the region and relatively low degree of experience of the EU require fresh and multidimensional approach to the resolution of the protracted conflicts that remain the major hindering factor for the further integration of such a strategically important region as South Caucasus.

As it has been already mentioned the violent conflicts broke out in the wake of disintegration of the Soviet Union when once autonomous republics Of Nagorno Karabakh, Abkhazia and autonomous region of South Ossetia claimed the intention of disintegration from the centre (Georgia and Azerbaijan) which eventually resulted in a full-scale war over the entire region.

Below more detailed presentation of these conflicts is being made.

4.3.1 Georgia.

The conflict between the Georgian state and South Ossetian autonomous region (oblasts) marked the beginning of decades-long wave of hostility, struggle for Tbilisi, which was also complemented by the later hostilities over the control for Abkhazia.

As it has been already noted the historical implications and the subsequent escalation dynamics of one conflict up till the establishment of the ceasefire in the beginning of 90s was identical to the remaining conflicts of the Post-Soviet era (de Waal 2010).

South Ossetia and Abkhazia – regions that entered into the Soviet Union as an integral part of Georgian SSR raised their discontent about the state of things and claimed right of self-determination after the start of Soviet Union's disintegration.

Similarly to other conflicts the main reasons for the dissatisfaction of the separatist regions can be listed as following (see country studies Georgia, Congress Library 1994):

Claims of unequal treatment and discrimination

Demands for special social, economic and political rights as a minority groups

The policy of Russia for keeping the conflict as a leverage restraining Georgian pro-western orientation

South Ossetia aspirations can rather be viewed as the desire to get unified with the North Ossetia, which is a federal region of Russian Federation. Despite the international community's position it has already in many ways been integrated with Russia. Thus the official language is Russian alongside with the usage of Russian currency as the regions currency. In addition almost 95% of the population has Russian citizenship (Novye Izvestiya, 4 February 2004, pp. 1-4).

The position of Abkhazia differed from the one of the South Ossetian only by its insistence on its sovereign status, which could not be an object for bargaining (ICG Report 2007).

Eventually, the wake of conflict immediately spilled into hostilities on the ground between the governmental troops and rebellious formations supported by Russian military experts. The comprehensive assistance of the Russian side combined with the Georgian inner political crisis of the transitional period served as decisive factors for the successful secession of two regions from the centre (Olson L.; 1999).

Once again the stance of Kremlin has been crucial in the conflicts dynamics. Moscow's intention to get maximum from the status quo has become even more apparent especially after the rose revolution of 2003, which brought on the political scene pro-Western orientated Mikhail Saakashvili how declared the integration into NATO and EU as the priorities of its presidency (Miller E. 2004). The five-day-full-scale war that erupted in August 2008 for South Ossetia and the subsequent recognition of two separatists regions by Russia was a lucid illustration of the power leverages of the former 'big brother' (Lobjakas A. 2009, Mikhelidze N. 2010)

The August war one more time came to prove the fears that the conflicts are far not frozen and in their current unresolved state can ignite easily impacting the whole regional stability.

The mediation frameworks existing so far under the auspicious of UN and OSCE with the existing peacekeeping mechanisms have proved its unviability for the overall settlement process and the new realities after the August war put new challenges for all the parties including EU concerned over the security and peace in South Caucasus.

4.3.2 Nagorno Karabakh

This is a conflict between Armenian community of the former Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Republic and the Republic of Azerbaijan – probably the most complicated and sensitive conflict among all frozen conflicts emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is aggravated with the existence of incompatible interests of Russia, Turkey and Iran over the issue and any resumption of hostilities risks to contribute to the internationalisation of the conflict.

The Nagorno Karabakh was an Autonomous Republic within the Azerbaijani SSR during the Soviet era with the majority of Armenian population who claimed separation from Baku ever since the period of Perestroika introduced right before the sundown of the USSR. The initial wave of demonstrations and intragroup clashes that led to further escalation and three-years long war between Azerbaijan and the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh supported by the Republic of Armenia which was ceased only in May 1994 by a Russian brokered ceasefire (Bishkek protocol 1994). The war cost lives of approx. 30000 people and the loss of the control over 20% of its territory by the Azerbaijani government (Armenian forces aside from Nagorno Karabakh keep control also over the so-called ‘security zone’ - seven surrounding districts including the Lachin corridor connecting the enclave with the Republic of Armenia (Svante E. Cornell, 2001, De Waal T; 2003).

Similarly to the other conflicts discussed above the settlement process within the OSCE Minsk Group (with three co-chairs –Russia, France and United States) has yielded little results aside from the endless rounds of negotiation process that goes on already for 15 years. It is also complicated by the rising reluctance for compromise in the negotiations since the Azerbaijani side keeps hopes that its economic supremacy based on the rising

incomes from the oil and gas exports will ensure the military dominance over Yerevan and settle conflict by force (Tocci N.; 2006, op.cit). Thus as the time goes by with no progress in the peaceful settlement the possibility of a new war becomes more realistic.

4.4 EU: A newcomer in the region.

Before starting any discussion about the EU engagement in the resolution of the South Caucasian protracted conflicts it should be noted that the Union has only relatively recently started to express more sound interest in the region and its policies towards three Caucasian countries are in the stage of development. The reasons for such belated interest towards the region lie in different dimensions. Firstly, it deals with the lack of internal capacities of the Union especially during the active phase of conflicts in the beginning of 90s. By then EU was greatly concerned with handling the crisis in Balkans and had no ‘free hands’ for engaging itself in the conflicts further abroad. Furthermore, by then EU was also highly reluctant to deal with the region, which was regarded as a vital sphere of Russian interests, and the relations with latter was overweighing factor explaining the Member States reluctance. However this is changing progressively over the time and EU undergoes the process of re-thinking of its own interests and perspectives in the region first of all in the regard of the Union’s concerns over its own energy security.

The region thus serves as an important transit corridor for the transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian basin. It is estimated that the demand on the Caspian energy resources are expected to grow further and by 2020 2/3 of all oil and gas for the EU Member States will comprise the resources imported where the Caspian route will play significantly bigger role (German J. 2007; 359).

This is supplemented by various other security threats that EU is anticipating from the region. Nuriyev summed up these threats into ‘unresolved territorial disputes, extremism and separatism and increasing volume of armed races’ (Nuriyev E. 2007).

Despite the lagging pace of political relations with the regional states, EU has managed to allocate considerable amount of aid ever since the emergence of the newly independent Caucasian States by means of various assistance programmes (TACIS, ECHD). The allocated funds were covering various humanitarian and development project spreading as well over the breakaway entities. To sum up the amount of aid allocated to the region one will get the figures of €505, €400 and €386 million to Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia respectively (SC Countries Strategy 2007-2013; (Popescu N.; 2007)).

This also builds upon the ENP and lately initiated EaP in 2008, which is meant to put the relations between the parties on substantially new level.

Aside from the substantial amount of aid and implementation of various programmes aimed at strengthening the democratic governance civil society and economic development, EU policy towards the region has encompassed its growing engagement and efforts in the resolution of the regional conflicts.

4.4.1 EU in the resolution of the Georgian conflicts

As it has already been mentioned earlier, the EU engagement in the resolution of the protracted conflicts with the adoption of the European security strategy in 2003, which in the case of Georgia got additional momentum after the rose revolution that made the voices of the westwards looking politicians, heard in Europe.

The response from the EU was rather quick to come with the appointment of the EUSR to the entire region and the subsequent expansion of the mandate in 2006 for increasing effectiveness related the conflict settlement (Tocci N, 2006; 60-80).

The new Georgian government was also keen on involving EU with its border Assistance Mission for the monitoring over the entire borderline with breakaway regions. There was obviously necessity for replacement of the former border mission

under the auspicious of OSCE that had for long ago lost its effectiveness. However the Union was unable to develop somewhat a solid response on that matter due to impossibility to overcome internal disagreements among the Member States who were cautious on the possible negative Russian reaction over that.

The least that became possible to extract from that situation was the deployment of the Border mission on the borders of Georgia that are not common with the conflicting zones. This collaboration served as a base for further operation of EUJUST Themis (EU rule of Law Mission) that was aimed at make contribution in the modernisation of the penal code of system.

It was noted that EU allocates substantial funds towards the conflict zones rehabilitation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The initial financial aid for the period of 1997-2004 amounted almost €33 million. Moreover this amount was increased subsequently with €2 million for each region as an immediate outcome of the OSCE organised conference of donors that took place in June of 2006. The allocated funds were to be directed at the conflict-torn infrastructure reconstruction, insurance of various social safety programmes. Aside from that EU allocated additional funds also to the implementation of programmes with the rehabilitation and the creation of precondition for the return of the internally displaced people (IDP) to the places of their former residence (European Commission Delegation to Georgia, ‘Abkhazia: Planned Projects’).

However it should be noted that for real value-added policy for the conflicts settlement process, the EU couldn’t confine itself to the role of mere donor. The successful implementation of humanitarian projects, confidence-building measures and rehabilitation are inherent parts of any conflict, which however need strong political platform for influencing the overall settlement process (Tocci ; 2006, op.cit.).

The latter becomes extremely actual but at the same time less realistic after the August War between Georgia and Russia and the subsequent recognition by the latter of two breakaway regions as new subjects of international relations. In general, that war became a millstone for the EU as a security actor. Despite the Union managed to make

quick response to the August war and brokered ceasefire in a great extent due to the personal efforts put by the French President Sarkozy who was presiding its six months term by then (see Medvedev-Sarkozy Plan; August 2008). Consequently EU managed to upgrade its position from the observer to ‘co-chairman’ in the negotiation among the parties. Thus EU managed to get bigger role in the undertaken Geneva talks between the parties and managed to bring together important donors at the conference held in Brussels in October 2008 which reached the sum of €500 million aimed at the Georgian infrastructure restoration heavily damaged after the war (Bardakçı M. opcit.).

Moreover the withdrawal of the UN and OSCE observer missions from the frontline after the Russian veto in 2009 practically left the EU Border Mission the only international operation present at the conflict zone (Bardakçı M. ibid.).

However, despite all these efforts one can state that EU conflict resolution efforts have been unsuccessful in the most important phase – not allowing changing the status quo the way it had been done after the war. The new realities on the ground thereafter led the entire settlement process out of its initial logic (peaceful restoration of the territorial integrity of the Georgian state) creating a situation of some deadlock with limited space for maandering for the external peace mediators. The situation of the EU as the only international actor left appears to be quite sensitive, since it obviously is keeping a bigger focus upon the reform process in Georgia while trying to get a bridge of dialogue between Tbilisi and the separatist entities in order to be able to fulfil its goals in the region.

4.4.2 EU in the resolution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict

The conflict over the Nagorno Karabakh is where the EU has its poorest record till date. It has expressed its full support to the on-going negotiation process under the auspicious of the OSCE Minsk Group, which has already lasted without any significant outcome for 15 years. This support is primarily made through the EUSR whose mandate covers the respective issues.

Similar to other conflicts EU most often has opted for low politics confining its role mainly to substantial amount of financial aid for the reconstruction of the destroyed infrastructure (Stewart E.; 2007: 9).

Also the lack of direct leverages over the political process around the conflict settlement made the EU focus on reform implementation by Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of Neighbourhood Policy. However despite the proclaimed priority for the Action Plan the big focus on the conflict resolution has remained mainly on the declarative level and little has been achieved in practice so far. EU did not succeed in pressing over the advance in the resolution process and reform implementation by the respective parties, which indicates on the loss of valuable opportunities for reaching a result (Grigoryan A.2003).

The passivity that the EU has expressed so far in the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict can partly be explained buy the unwillingness of the parties to see more EU engagement in the process. While Moldova and Georgia have been more enthusiastic in their European integration aspirations Armenia and Azerbaijan have been more passive in that regard trying to keep strong relations with Kremlin. This is especially the case with Armenia who sees the alliance with Russia as vital precondition for its security. Armenia is a member to (CSTO) a military-political alliance founded on the backbone of Moscow and hosts N102 Russian military base on its territory. On the other side the Azerbaijani leadership despite its alliance with Turkey who in turn is a NATO member and its dependence from the energy contracts coming mainly from the West, still sees the keys to the conflict resolution in the hands of Russia therefore does not hurry to proclaim full readiness to get integrated with the West as it was done by the neighbouring Georgian leadership.

It should be noted also that despite the heavy-going Minsk group process, it has managed to solve probably its most important task – hindering the resumption of violence on the ground. Therefore any discussion about the possible modification of the mediating framework not necessarily can lead to any progress at all.

Any EU engagement thus can be rather complicated since it will be hard to imagine any side to make concessions so the existing status quo seem to satisfy the both parties. It is also obvious that the external actors including the EU would prefer the maintenance of the status quo unless a mutually acceptable solution would be reached. Any new war and instability can affect the millions of investments that the foreign companies including European have made in the region ever since the independence of these countries.

The public opinion polls have showed that the relatively bigger part of the population in Azerbaijan would like to see more EU engagement in the resolution process (Nuriyev E. 2007). This however is contradicted by the discontent of the Azerbaijani leadership who expects from EU stronger stance on the condemnation of the position of the Armenian authorities (ICG 2006).

In general the EU stance on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict can be characterised as unclear and often full of various contradictions. It becomes apparent fro the signed Action Plan with Armenia and Azerbaijan where the support for principle of territorial integrity is stressed in the Azerbaijani document, while the principle of self-determination mentioned in the Armenian one (EU-Armenia Action Plan: 9). German finds possible explanation to these inconsistencies within the dimension of Member States preferences, more specifically the French, who is a co-chairman in the Minsk Group and highly negatively perceived by the Azerbaijani side as an impartial mediator due to the presence of significant Armenian community in France (German T. op.cit).

The image of an impartial mediator is crucial for the EU's role in the settlement process. Perceiving itself as being such it has voiced its preparedness to handle the future peacekeeping operation on the ground as soon as the agreement upon the principles of resolution will be agreed between the parties (Popescu N., op.cit.). This could be complemented by subsequent increase of the financial aid for the conflict rehabilitation and various development projects in the region.

It is worth to pay attention on the statement made by French co-chairman Bernard Fassier, who sees the efforts of OSCE insufficient since it has only political measures in its disposal while the EU involvement thus becomes crucial for the conflict resolution because also of its substantial economic resources (BBC; 2005: 12).

Thus the lack of direct leverages over the political process around the conflict settlement made the EU focus on reform implementation by Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of Neighbourhood Policy. However despite the proclaimed priority for the Action Plan the big focus on the conflict resolution, it has remained mainly on the declarative level and little has been achieved in practice so far. EU did not succeed in pressing over the advance in the resolution process and reform implementation by the respective parties, which indicates on the loss of valuable opportunities for reaching a result.

So it is possible to note, that the efforts the EU has put so far on the level of low politics has yielded little outcomes due to the lack of incentives from the parties to push ahead some signs of reconciliation. There is a necessity for increased attention and pressure upon the conflicting sides. In that regard the representation of EU on the Member States level in the Minsk process is not sufficient and there is a need for EU direct involvement in the mediation through the official EUSR mandate in the region.

5. Research Findings

Conclusion

The case studies conducting above were aimed to get better insights on the security threats that unresolved ‘frozen ethnic conflicts’ can inflict upon the regional security and the efforts EU has put in order to boost the settlement process. In this regard, the data analysis has yielded number of interesting results that can shed light on the examined phenomenon.

The case studies have comprised four ethnic conflicts that erupted in the sundown of the Soviet Union. By ‘frozen’ we refer to all these four conflicts for illustrating their unresolved and deadlocked nature, where ‘freezing’ – in other words postponing the conflict resolution till some time in the future when the geopolitical conjecture and the positions of the conflicting parties will foster the achievement of a durable peace.

While the term ‘frozen’ has been long applied to these conflicts the study in reality illustrates that this ‘adjective’ has often been used by ‘default’ and can be misleading in reflecting the actual state of things and the dynamics in the conflict zones.

Given the conceptual framework in mind, deployed in the Section 3 of this study, the analysis of the causal factors of these conflicts allow us to classify these conflicts as ‘ethnic’. The political, socio-economic, and cultural triggers in one or another way have been inherent to all four ethnic conflicts examined. However, while socio-economic disadvantages have been equally crucial for all this cases when it comes to conflict escalation and insistence of subsequent separation from the centre, elements of purely ethnic enmity and incompatibility claims vary across the cases from relatively low in the case of

Transnistria till extremely high between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the case of Nagorno Karabakh.

The examination of these conflicts illustrates also similar patterns of their escalation under the same historical context i.e. the dissolution of the Soviet Union and emergence of the new independent subjects of international relations.

Thus the outcomes of the conflicts appear also to be identical – the separation of the periphery from the centre as a result of full-scale wars in the wake of 90s. All four states have suffered heavily from the defects of the premature and weak statehoodness, which also in a significant extent has contributed that the control over breakaway regions has been lost. The establishment of the ceasefire in these conflicts thus marks the de facto emergence of new unrecognised entities who found themselves at the margin of international affairs heavily dependant for their survival on the protector states. The status quo in some extent has created illusion of endless possibility to protract the resolution of the conflicts thus avoiding sensitive decisions and compromises for the time being.

The observation of these conflicts has yielded also interesting insights within the realm of security concerns that can affect not only the conflicted parties but also all other actors who have interests and in some form is involved in the region.

As the cases illustrate, the unresolved status quo bears serious threats on the overall regional security, though at the first sight it might seem that similar to their frozen unresolved status the threats also have been securely wrapped into a somewhat ‘frozen’ state for long ever since the beginning of the conflicts. However, the observation of the conflict development dynamics allow us to discern their rather ‘simmering’ state possible to reignite at any point. Consequently preconditions for the reescalation were visible in all four cases. The continuous frustration over the heavy-going settlement process that yields no visible results already the second decade in a row raises the militaristic rhetoric in the respective countries and triggers even higher speed of arm race in the region. The fears that rapid remilitarization of the army will inevitably lead to the re-eruption of the violence in the conflict zones were once again practically confirmed in the case of Georgia when the Saakashvili regime after getting on the political scene has continuously rearmed the army with the US assistance primarily, which culminated in a 5 days full-scale Russian-Georgian war in August 2008 for South Ossetia.

Here it is crucial to note the hegemonic role that Russia managed to ensure for itself during the last 2 decades of these conflicts. The crucial leverages that Russia is in possession in relation to the conflicted parties capable to affect the settlement process in any possible way was mentioned by the analysts as well as western politicians before and similarly found their confirmation also in the current research. Russian dominant role is ensured through various mechanisms created in the wake of the conflicts in 90s when the international community was dealing with the crisis in Balkans and Middle East. First of all, the Russian role as an immediate and weighty assistant for the separatist entities became crucial for the course of the conflicts. Russia managed to broker to ceasefire in all four cases and in three of them established direct control over the situation dislocating its peacekeeping forces under the UN mandate. In the case of Nagorno Karabakh the international peacekeeping framework is missing while Russia keeps its military base on the territory of Armenia and has alliance with the latter for ensuring its security obligations (bilateral agreements as well as within the framework of CSTO). At the same time the Moscow holds quite close relations also with Baku thus maintaining the ‘intrigue’ with its ambiguous position.

Aside from the increasing risks of resumption of the war in the region, the unresolved disputes bear security threats in other dimensions, which are tightly interconnected. While the international community has selected the strategy of isolation merely ignoring the existence of the ‘unrecognised states’, thus creating strong legal vacuums where criminal trade illegal smuggling and corruption were flourishing serving as a strengthening source for the de facto states. The Western countries have done little in tackling also the economic security matters for the disputed territories, which make the unrecognised regimes and the protector states (in the case of Armenia) to rely heavily on Russian market and subsidiaries coming from Kremlin.

Going back to the abovementioned August 2008 war for South Ossetia, one would mention it’s significance for understanding the Russian influence over the dynamics of all frozen conflicts; it served as a clear signal and even more increased the dependence of all Post Soviet Republics on Moscow in their security considerations.

However even though the newly-independent republics with territorial disputes are parts of the Post-Soviet security complex, the threats stemming from the unresolved conflicts can pose serious security concerns for the EU also who becomes more vulnerable towards possible threats and spill-over effects the closer it gets geographically to its conflicted neighbourhood.

Moreover, aside from the concerns about various spill-over effects can be caused in a result of any new wave of instability, growing criminality and illegal smuggling into the EU territory, the Community is also satisfying the raising need for the diversification of its energy supplies which is crucial for the Union's energy security concerns. Hence unresolved conflicts located in the mid of a strategic corridor of oil and gas transportation from the Caspian and the Central Asia, pose a serious threat for the normal of operation of the new energy stream.

While the interest towards its eastern neighbourhood grows constantly during the last decade, the research indicates on number of challenges EU is facing on the way for its new engagements.

First of all those are internal shortcomings that hinder Union's actorness in the region related to the degree of coherence in the position of the Member States regarding the Black Sea- South Caucasian Region.

The amendments with the Lisbon Treaty has indicated the potential for subsequent increase of EU as a coherent actor on the global arena which can naturally have its impact on the Community's efforts in the cases of conflict resolution. However this is something that could be analysed after certain period of time in the future.

As for now when the CFSP direction is decided on the intergovernmental level, it has appeared for many Members the activation of the efforts for frozen conflicts resolution on the EU level has been left far out of the priority list. The policy reluctance in this area until now has pointed on the idea that potential security threats that the unresolved state of these conflicts bear are not perceived serious for EU security itself. The growing attraction of the energy resources of the Caspian in the long run add insufficient value and the short and midterm energy security considerations have overweighed the significance of the relations with Russia.

Moreover, long lasting deadlock that prevails in the settlement process requires substantially new comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention and resolution on the Post-Soviet space, which Brussels has not developed yet. While the ENP was the main framework for the EU to interact with its eastern neighbours it has offered limited incentives capable to affect the conflict resolution issue. Here EU has missed also its most valuable instrument the ‘principle of conditionality on the membership perspectives’, which could possibly be an effective instrument for impacting the stance of the conflicted parties.

For more clear illustration the summary of the EU efforts towards the frozen conflicts can be depicted as following:

<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Participation in the political settlement process</i>	<i>Peacekeeping Units and Border Monitoring</i>	<i>Economic Assistance</i>
Transnistria	Observer in the 5+2 format	EU BAM since 2005	Yes
Abkhazia	Absent	EU BAM since 2009	Yes
South Ossetia	Ceasefire broker during the August war 2008; co-chairmen in the short-stated Geneva talks	EU BAM since 2009 Located on the Georgian territory	Yes
Nagorno Karabakh	Absent/ support for the OSCE Minsk Group	Absent	Yes

Thus, in reference to the study outcomes, number of interesting observations comes up regarding the EU’s efforts for the resolution of these conflicts.

The first thing that sticks out is the judgement that EU has mainly focused its efforts within the dimension of ‘low politics’ by means of substantial financial aid and technical assistance overall allocating more than €1bn since 1997. While the significance of the economic resources is hard to underestimate, it still appears insufficiently effective in the situation of the absence of working political leverages

upon the parties. The EU has had hard so far to ‘get in’ the process of mediation confining its role to mere donor for the conflicts rehabilitation.

Secondly, the varying degree of engagement in all four conflicts gives some ‘food’ for further analysis.

EU can be credited for putting intensive efforts in Transnistria: First ever deployed EU Border Mission over the borderline with Transnistria has been a successful step forward and helped to reduce the ‘smuggling chaos’ that prevailed before. EU has done much in bridging a dialogue of reconciliation between the parties. It seems here only Russian insistence to see the conflict resolution in accordance with its scenario is a hindering factor for the eventual settlement. Kremlin still keeps first of all its military and political leverages over the conflict.

So the active EU role in Transnistria can be explained first of all by its geographic proximity to the conflicting zone, which makes take into more serious consideration the risks connected with the unresolved state of the conflict. Even though the conflict is still in the realm of post-soviet security complex, it has due to its location has significant degree of dependence on the EU especially when it comes to economic security. Thus this ‘middle-hanging’ position makes more space for EU action.

While the case of Transnistria leaves more opportunities for peaceful resolution due to its relatively uncomplicated nature also, the EU efforts in the South Caucasian conflicts have yielded far more poor results so far.

EU has increased its attention to the conflicts in Georgia drastically after the rose revolution in that country which proclaimed adherence to the western values of democracy and integration into the European Community.

The August 2008 war was decisive for the European diplomacy, since it provided real opportunity for action. Even though EU made use of opportunity and accomplished its role as a credible actor in crisis prevention subsequent recognition of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Moscow has minimised this short run achievement and in general can be regarded as a failure for EU diplomacy.

The least representation EU has achieved so far is in Nagorno Karabakh. The conflict is the most distant from the EU; has been the most bloody and most complicated with extremely high degree of enmity between the parties. It is complicated further with the presence of regional and global actors with their interests. Here similarly to other conflicts Kremlin has developed working instruments, which makes the conflicting parties see no alternatives for their security other than good relationships with Russia. In contrast to other conflicts where the EU had sometimes slightly vague but still some vision on the ways of resolution with the support of the principle of territorial integrity, here it has failed to develop clear stance over the issue. The lack of clear vision can be partly explained by the complexity and sensitivity of the conflict where both parties just claim incompatibility with each other. Moreover there is some sort of split within the EU itself; while some Members States with significant Armenian communities as the case is with France believed to have more pro-Armenian position, some other like Great Britain who has strong energy contracts interests has been more inclined to the side of Baku. This split and ambiguity of the EU position was also found in the Action Plan of both countries, where in the Azerbaijani Plan the resolution of the conflict with the support of territorial integrity was prioritised, while the Armenian Action Plan related to the conflict at article 7 where EU also underlines the principle of self-determination as a crucial point for resolution. This unclear stance and lack of opportunities to affect the status quo has made EU do little but support any solution that the parties could achieve by means of peaceful negotiations.

Thus the conflict of Nagorno Karabakh is where EU was reluctant to engage for long has achieved least, at the same time the conflict is the most dangerous in its re-eruption potential that will hardly be confined into local war but will include other regional actors the parties are allied with. Moreover EU incentives for deeper engagement increase further given its recent failure in the case of Georgian conflicts. Although this are only considerations that could be lived up to only in the future, and for now the EU's capabilities and opportunities in the region remain quite limited.

6. Executive Summary

The given thesis was designed to examine the problem of the unresolved ‘frozen ethnic conflicts’ emerged in the aftermath of the Former Soviet Union. The aim was to shed light on the nature of these conflicts and the security threat that their unresolved state bears for the entire European security architecture. The study had in its focus the role that EU plays in the process of resolution of these conflicts and understanding probable factors constraining this role.

The issue of frozen or protracted conflicts have been inherent elements of the post-soviet regional security discourse, but have been also characterised with big dominance of Russia and relative passivity of the West including EU. However, enlargement process has pushed EU external borders right forward towards conflicted zones combined with the gradual growing of the Union’s internal capacities for shaping autonomous foreign policy on the supranational level made any discourse of deeper engagement more actual than before.

So for better exploring the phenomenon a research question as been posed:

What can the case of unresolved frozen ethnic conflicts tell us about EU as a security actor?

Subsequently for more focused study number of sub-questions have been posed that might help to answer the central research question of this thesis.

Sub-questions:

What can the frozen conflicts tell us about overall security concerns in the region?

What are the factors that can constrain the EU’s role in the settlement process of these conflicts?

In order to answer the research questions posed the thesis was design as Prospective Case Study analysis with theory-testing approach.

The main argument of the thesis could be understood as following: The frozen ethnic conflicts are part of a security complex other than EU, which determines the degree of actorness that EU can exert across the security complex boundaries over the settlement process of these conflicts.

Thus the argument revolves around the idea that the frozen ethnic conflicts despite their proximity to the EU continue to be located within a parallel Post-Soviet complex undisputedly dominated by Russia. In this situation EU has more limited capabilities (effective policy instruments) also low degree of coherence (the unresolved state of these conflicts is not prioritised by the Member States as a source of immediate security concern) and opportunities (limited by the presence of other actors with more solid interests, holding control over the dynamics of the conflicts) for increasing its own role within the resolution process of these conflicts. This is supplemented also by a possession of a low degree of ‘credible image’ in the eyes of conflicting parties.

Consequently, the following conceptual framework has been constructed:

Theoretical framework: Regional Security Complex Theory

Recognition, Actorness and Effectiveness

Ethnic Conflicts: Conceptual clarifications

‘Frozen’ in relation towards ethnic conflicts

The conceptual clarifications thus were followed by the actual process of the data collection necessary for conducting the analysis of the chosen cases, which covered the conflict of Transnistria, Abkhazia South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh. The study is using the prospective case study strategy with pattern matching technique the case

study observations would serve for comparing the compatibility of the deducted hypothesis.

The case study process covered the examination of all four conflicts separately and the role EU has played in each conflicts. Moreover Union's internal capacities for working engagement in these conflicts were also examined.

The conclusive part of the thesis covered the analysis of the study outcomes and the possibility of matching them with the proposed hypothesis.

It indicates shortcomings in coherence in policy shaping towards the unresolved ethnic conflicts which is determined by Member states interest consideration who don't perceive the unresolved conflicts as urgent security threat for the EU security and willingly yield the leadership role to other actors primarily to Russia, relations with the latter are prioritised higher in this regard. The study indicates also the lack of credibility of EU in the eyes of the regional states given the lack of membership perspective, while other actors can offer more solid contribution as Russia or United States. The EU has not developed a comprehensive strategy for conflict resolution, which hinders its actorness soundly.

The outcomes indicated number of similarities as well as certain specifics among the conflicts studied. It was indicated that all the conflicted parties are part of Post-Soviet security complex with an undisputed dominance of Russian Federation who has developed sound leverages over the parties.

Moreover the study made valuable contributions for understanding the role EU has played so far in all four conflicts, which can be summarised, as following:

<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Participation in the political settlement process</i>	<i>Peacekeeping Units and Border Monitoring</i>	<i>Economic Assistance</i>
Transnistria	Observer in the 5+2 format	EU BAM since 2005	Yes
Abkhazia	Absent	EU BAM since 2009	Yes
South Ossetia	Ceasefire broker during the August war 2008; co-chairmen in the short-asted Geneva talks	EU BAM since 2009 Located on the Georgian territory	Yes

<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Participation in the political settlement process</i>	<i>Peacekeeping Units and Border Monitoring</i>	<i>Economic Assistance</i>
Nagorno Karabakh	Absent/ support for the OSCE Minsk Group	Absent	Yes

The results indicate interesting disproportionality: while EU has been most active in the resolution of Transnistria it has been practically unnoticed in the case of Nagorno Karabakh. The relative success in Transnistria is explained by the geographical proximity to the Union's external borders and personal interest that one of the Member States (Romania) has in the resolution of the conflict. Even though Moldova is still part of Post-Soviet security complex it has economic security dependence on the EU market also which makes the puts the country in the mid-hanging position and enables more space and opportunities for EU to be engaged with the resolution. This is supplemented by the fact that conflict in Transnistria has been characterised as being relatively easy for solution.

In contrast the EU engagement in the South Caucasian conflicts has yielded less visible results especially in the case of Nagorno Karabakh where EU has quite limited opportunities for engagement. Since the absence of any vision about the conflict should be solved it has opted for rather passive role unconsciously supporting the status quo – i.e. ‘any fragile peace is better than new war’.

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Appendix 1

Map of The Conflicts

Moldova and Transnistria



South Caucasus

