

## GUAM AND CONFLICT SETTLEMENT IN GEORGIA

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On 22 April, 2005, the GUUAM members (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova), who met in Chisinau to mark the organization's eighth anniversary, finally crossed the Rubicon. On that day the heads of the member states made public GUUAM's political ambitions. This ended the period of "infantile disorder" and the Big Brother syndrome. The fact that Uzbekistan rejected the new policy and left the structure meant that a new international political organization appeared. President of Uzbekistan Karimov first declined to attend

the summit and then denounced all the treaties the country signed when his country joined the Organization. This and other signs testify that the sluggishly developing quasi-alliance became a hyper-active political structure. In other words, GUUAM became GUAM!

The Chisinau summit abounded in bold and fairly unexpected political statements, nevertheless, the members' vehement criticism of Russia's role and policy in the conflict zones in Abkhazia, the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Transnis-

tria sounded louder than the others. GUAM, which brought together the countries with frozen conflicts on their territories, finally acquired the self-confidence needed to put an end to the conflicts in the post-Soviet expanse. Since that time, the GUAM members have been trying to convince the international community that they should be involved in the decision-making. There are too many so-called operators and actors whose status obliges them to deal with the conflicts in the Central Caucasus and the Black Sea region.

To find a niche of its own and to contribute to the still absent dynamics in the settlement process, GUAM should study the menu the international organizations compiled, either on a permanent basis or sporadically, for the conflict settlement they have been following for the last 15 years. In Georgia the situation is fairly complicated: only a careful investigation will allow GUAM to identify its own conflict settlement potential.

There are two smoldering ethno-territorial conflicts in Georgia, the military stages of which have become frozen. Today the conflicts can be described as stagnating. I have in mind the conflict in Abkhazia where armed confrontation ended in the fall of 1993 and in the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region where fighting stopped in the summer of 1992. Since the cease-fire, relations between Tbilisi and Sukhumi and Tbilisi and Tskhinvali can be described as “fragile stagnation.” The negotiating sides regularly found themselves at a dead end; from time to time the talks were cut short because of another flare-up (this happened in May 1998 and October 2001 in Abkhazia; in July 2004 a bout of armed disorder in the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region nearly escalated into full-scale fighting). The sides signed several agreements none of them faithfully followed and accused each other of violating them. Today, the talks have been indefinitely suspended and there are no signs of their resumption.

## What Should These Conflicts be Called?

The names of the conflicts and definitions of the sides have already caused misunderstandings. On 15 March, 2007, in his annual address to the Georgian parliament, President Saakashvili lamented the terms “Georgian-Abkhaz conflict” and “Georgian-Ossetian conflict.” He said: “The terms were invented by stupid people, misinformed people. We should realize once and for all that this is merely another lie of the imperial ideologists and spin doctors.” That day the president repeated what he had said a year earlier, on 14 February, 2006.

All the authors and those who speak about the conflicts are using two phrases—either the “Georgian-Abkhaz conflict” or the “conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.” The first version normally appears in documents signed by both sides—Statement on Measures for the Political Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict<sup>1</sup> initialed in Moscow on 4 April, 1994. This term is also used in some of the documents issued by the Commonwealth of Independent States, such as the Statement of the Council of the CIS Heads of State on Carrying out a Peacekeeping Operation in the Zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict Adopted in Moscow on 15 April, 1994.<sup>2</sup>

The second version, “conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia,” appears in documents drawn up and signed by entities of international law (to which Abkhazia does not belong). All the resolutions of the

<sup>1</sup> [<http://www.un.org/russian/peace/pko/unomig/94-397.pdf>].

<sup>2</sup> See: [<http://www.un.org/russian/peace/pko/unomig/94-476.pdf>] or *Postanovlenie Soveta ministrov Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoy Federatsii "O dal'neyshikh merakh po uregulirovaniyu gruzino-abkhazskogo konflikta" ot 13 sentiabria 1993 goda (Sobranie aktov Prezidenta i Pravitel'stva Rossiiskoy Federatsii ot 13 sentiabria 1993 g., No. 39, p. 4042).*

U.N. Security Council speak of the “conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.”<sup>3</sup> Resolution 1615 (2005) of 29 July, 2005 says in part: “Stressing that the continued lack of progress on key issues of a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia...” After the presidential address of 14 February, 2006, in which President Saakashvili described the terms “Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts” as “incompetent and invented by Georgia’s ill-wishers,” all the later resolutions of the U.N. Security Council described the conflict as “Georgian-Abkhaz.” This means that the U.N. SC disagreed with the president of Georgia. Resolution 1666 (2006) of the U.N. SC of 31 March, 2006 says: “...supports all efforts by the United Nations and the group of Friends of the Secretary General which are guided by their determination to promote a settlement of the Georgia-Abkhaz conflict...”<sup>4</sup> Resolution 1716 (2006) of the U.N. SC of 13 October, 2006 says: “Regretting the continued lack of progress on key issues of a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict,” the U.N. SC “1. Supports all efforts by the United Nations and the Group of Friends of the Secretary General which are guided by their determination to promote a settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict;... 7. ...Acknowledges the important role of the CIS peacekeeping force and of UNOMIG in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict zone.”<sup>5</sup>

The description of the conflict in the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region is equally vague. The fundamental document related to the settlement of this conflict signed in Sochi on 24 June, 1992 is entitled Treaty on the Principles of Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict.<sup>6</sup> Later the confrontation was referred to as “Georgian-Ossetian.” The Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Georgia on Economic Rehabilitation of the Areas in the Zone of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict. 14 September, 1993<sup>7</sup> is one of the examples. The term is still used. This is confirmed by the protocols of the Joint Control Commission (JCC) drawn up since the fall of 1994. Such are, for example, the Agreement on Further Development of the Peaceful Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict and on the Joint Control Commission. 31 October, 1994 and the Statement on the Results of the Meeting between Z. Zhvania and E. Kokoity drawn up in Sochi on 5 November, 2003: “... The sides, having exchanged opinions on the issues related to the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, announced that they remained dedicated to the fundamental documents signed within the framework of the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict and which supply a firm basis for the talks on the entire range of political settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict,” and so on. The Peace Plan elaborated and scheduled by the government of Georgia presented at the meeting of the OSCE foreign ministers in Ljubljana late in 2005 was entitled “Georgian-South Ossetian Peace Plan developed by the Government of Georgia”<sup>8</sup> The document submitted to the Batumi conference in July 2005 is called “Initiative of the Government of Georgia with Respect to the Peaceful Settlement of the South Ossetian Conflict.”<sup>9</sup>

## Legal Expanse and Institutions

Institutions obligated to monitor the conflicts and transform them through peaceful means were set up under the agreements of 1993 and 1994.

<sup>3</sup> [<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/446/18/PDF/N0544618.pdf?OpenElement>].

<sup>4</sup> [<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/293/33/PDF/N0629333.pdf?OpenElement>].

<sup>5</sup> [<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/570/52/PDF/N0657052.pdf?OpenElement>].

<sup>6</sup> See: *Svobodnaia Gruzia*, 27 June, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> See: *Diplomaticheskii vestnik*, No. 23-24, 1993, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> [<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/593/85/PDF/N0559385.pdf?OpenElement>]

<sup>9</sup> [<http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=G&m=0&sm=5>].

The Agreement on the Principles of Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict<sup>10</sup> signed on 24 June, 1992 in Sochi by the Republic of Georgia and the Russian Federation serves as the political and legal foundation for the settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. The document led to the final and still observed ceasefire throughout the entire territory of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region. A Joint Control Commission set up under the agreement is a quadripartite body that involves the Georgian, South Ossetian, Russian, and North Ossetian sides. In June 1992, the document served as the foundation of the united tripartite 1,500-strong peacekeeping contingent with a Joint Command. On 6 November, 1992, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (later Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—OSCE) passed a decision to become directly involved in the settlement.

The Statement on the Measures for Political Settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict<sup>11</sup> of 4 April, 1994 serves as the settlement's political-legal foundation. The same can be said about the Quadripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons<sup>12</sup> and the Agreement on Ceasefire and Separation of Forces<sup>13</sup> of 14 May, 1994.

The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) was set up on 24 August, 1993 by Resolution No. 858 (1993) of the U.N. Security Council;<sup>14</sup> its mandate described by Resolution No. 937 (1994) of 21 July, 1994 of the U.N. Security Council consisted of the following:

- “(a) to monitor and verify implementation by the parties of the Agreement on a Cease-fire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May, 1994;
- (b) to observe the operation of the CIS peace-keeping force within the framework of the implementation of the Agreement;
- (c) to verify, through observation and patrolling, that the troops of the parties do not remain in or re-enter the security zone and that heavy military equipment does not remain or is not reintroduced into the security zone or the restricted weapons zone;
- (d) to monitor the storage areas for heavy military equipment withdrawn from the security zone and the restricted weapons zone in cooperation with the CIS peace-keeping force as appropriate;
- (e) to monitor the withdrawal of troops of the Republic of Georgia from the Kodori valley to places beyond the boundaries of Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia;
- (f) to patrol regularly the Kodori valley;
- (g) to investigate, at the request of either party or the CIS peace-keeping force or on its own initiative, reported or alleged violations of the Agreement and to attempt to resolve or contribute to the resolution of such incidents;
- (h) to report regularly to the Secretary-General within its mandate, in particular on the implementation of the Agreement, any violations and their investigation by UNOMIG, as well as other relevant developments;
- (i) to maintain close contacts with both parties to the conflict and to cooperate with the CIS peace-keeping force and, by its presence in the area, to contribute to conditions conducive to the safe and orderly return of refugees and displaced persons.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See: *Svobodnaia Gruzia*, 27 June, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> See: *Svobodnaia Gruzia*, 4 April, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> See: *Svobodnaia Gruzia*, 6 April, 1994.

<sup>13</sup> See: *Svobodnaia Gruzia*, 17 May, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> [<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/MHII-68UB4U?OpenDocument>].

<sup>15</sup> [<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/MHII-65G7RP?OpenDocument>].

On 22 August, 1994, the Council of the Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States passed a decision on the use of the Collective Peacekeeping Force in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. The council responded to the requests of the Abkhaz side of 15 May, 1994 and the Georgian side of 16 May, 1994 in which the sides almost unanimously asked the CIS leaders to introduce peacekeepers as promptly as possible to maintain peace in the conflict zone. The CIS heads of state decided to dispatch Russian peacekeepers who were expected to (a) monitor implementation of the ceasefire, maintain peace, and prevent resumed hostilities in the conflict zone by separation of the conflicting sides' armed forces; (b) create conditions for the safe and dignified return of the people who left the conflict zone to their places of permanent residence and observe the other provisions of the Quadripartite Agreement on the Voluntary Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons of 4 April, 1994.<sup>16</sup>

The statement on the measures of political settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict of 4 April, 1994 opened the way to the so-called Geneva process intended to keep the Georgian-Abkhaz peace talks going. On 17-19 November, 1997, at their regular meeting in Geneva, the sides agreed to establish a Coordinating Council and, within its framework, working groups in the following areas:

- Issues related to lasting non-resumption of the hostilities and security problems;
- Refugees and internally displaced persons;
- Economic and social problems.<sup>17</sup>

The same meeting set up the Group of Friends of the Secretary General which was “to participate in meetings and make statements and proposals on various aspects of the peace process, including political settlement.” The Group was not party “to the negotiations and shall not be invited to sign documents agreed upon during the negotiations by the parties.” The Group consisted of the United States, Russia, Great Britain, Germany, and France.

The so-called Boden Document<sup>18</sup> reflected the international community's general idea about the principles applied to settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Despite the document's generally accepted content, the conflicting sides were not completely satisfied with it. Abkhazia was worried by the prospect of reintegration into the Georgian state, while the Georgian side equally feared Abkhazia's confirmed sovereignty. Can this contradiction be resolved? If the document's key principles acquire specific legal and political democratic mechanisms and guarantees, the sides are expected to accept the prospect of settlement. They alone can determine the settlement conditions, since neither the U.N. nor the international community is able to independently determine the mutually acceptable degree of sovereignty.

The above-mentioned institutions and the prolonged experience of conflict transformation and settlement, as well as the numerous agreements and treaties have proven useless: after 15 years, the sides still insist on their radical and irreconcilable positions. The Abkhaz and Ossetian leaders claim that they want independence from Georgia recognized by the international community. The Georgian side has not yet described its idea about the future arrangement; it is still unclear what mechanisms will guarantee the sovereignty of Abkhazia and former South Ossetian Autonomous Region within Georgia and the extent to which the two structures will be sovereign. So far, there are no joint positions on these issues.

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<sup>16</sup> See: *Sbonik dokumentov, kasaiushchikhsia voprosa uregulirovania konflikta v Abkhazii, Gruzia, priniatykh v period s 1992 po 1999 god*, compiled by G. Uridia, Tbilisi, 1999, pp. 40-42.

<sup>17</sup> See: *Svobodnaia Gruzia*, 20 November, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> The document Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competencies between Tbilisi and Sukhumi drawn by special representative of the U.N. Secretary General Dieter Boden with participation of the U.N. Secretary General's Group of Friends, 20 November, 2001.

This explains why settlement remains entrusted to outside forces represented by the U.N., Russia, the U.S., the Group of Friends, the OSCE, the EU, and GUAM. In the absence of a clear official position on the status and guarantees for the breakaway regions within the Georgian state, the friendly countries and institutions find themselves in a difficult situation: they are unable to convince the Abkhaz and Ossetian sides to reincorporate into Georgia.

## Dynamics of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict

The years 2004 and 2006 proved to be the most turbulent in the 15 years of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. This was when Georgia radically changed its attitude toward Russia's role in the conflict settlement. The armed clashes in June-July 2004 around Tskhinvali invited negative dynamics.

Later, when Eduard Shevardnadze and Aslan Abashidze, leader of the Ajarian Autonomy, were painlessly and effectively removed from the political scene the new Georgian leaders imagined that all the other problems could be resolved as painlessly and effectively. In their haste the euphoric leaders demonstrated more aggressiveness than wisdom: their ill-considered strategy, which ignored the interests of the local Ossets and ignited armed clashes, cost the sides human lives. This suspended all socioeconomic projects, deprived the country of Western support and widened the gap between the Ossets and Georgians. In short, the result was the opposite of what was expected.

This somewhat sobered the leaders: in September 2005 at a meeting of the U.N. General Assembly, President Mikhail Saakashvili offered his plan of consistent conflict resolution. On 26 January, 2005, he presented, with great success, the new Initiative of the Georgian Government with Respect to Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in South Ossetia.<sup>19</sup> In December 2005, Georgia familiarized the OSCE ministerial meeting in Ljubljana with the peace plan for South Ossetia drawn up by the Georgian Cabinet.<sup>20</sup> These interesting and promising initiatives remained on paper; the short-term results outweighed the long-term prospects. Today, no one remembers any of these documents.

The approaches were revised once more: today a different project occupies the Georgian leaders' minds: it was decided to separate the Ossets living in the territory of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region by setting up an "alternative government of South Ossetia" with Dmitri Sanakoev (who fought against Georgia in 1990-1992 and changed sides in 2006) as its head. He was appointed to the post of the head of the Provisional Administration of South Ossetia on 1 August, 2007. Today he is engaged in monitoring self-administrations within the administrative-territorial unit called South Ossetia on the strength of a decision by the government of Georgia of 27 July, 2007.

Georgia insists that the negotiation format that has exhausted itself or is merely ineffective should be changed. The Joint Control Commission has not met since the summer of 2006: the Georgian side refuses to be involved with this useless structure. It is convinced that the de facto Tskhinvali authorities and Sanakoev, who heads the Provisional Administration, should talk to one another. On 29 February, 2008, State Minister for Reintegration Temuri Iakobashvili suggested that the JCC format be a new 2 + 2 + 2 format made up of Georgia and Dmitry Sanakoev's government; Russia and the de facto South Ossetian administration; the OSCE and EU. On 4 March, Minister Iakobashvili announced that Tbilisi refused to discuss the South Ossetian conflict resolution within the JCC.<sup>21</sup> Russia, in turn, prefers to save the Joint Control Commission.

<sup>19</sup> [<http://www.president.gov.ge/others/initru.htm>].

<sup>20</sup> [<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/593/85/PDF/N0559385.pdf?OpenElement>].

<sup>21</sup> [<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=17257>].

## The Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict

The conflict in Abkhazia does not demonstrate the dynamics typical of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region. Abkhazia can be described as an economically impotent and mostly uncontrolled area. Moscow, which pays lip service to Georgia's territorial integrity, has already engulfed (in the economic sense) the breakaway region. On 6 March, 2008, the Foreign Ministry of Russia announced that Moscow had unilaterally withdrawn from the 1996 CIS Agreement that introduced economic sanctions against Abkhazia.<sup>22</sup> This turned Abkhazia, almost the entire population of which carries Russian passports, into another dependent Caucasian region; to a great extent its domestic developments are Kremlin-controlled. The Georgians who comprise about one-third of the total population of Abkhazia use their native tongue restrictively; there are no Georgian schools where they can learn the language; today it is essentially secretly taught in Russian schools functioning in Abkhazia.

### “Key to the Future”

The Key to the Future document occupies a special place among the numerous documents related to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Created by the Abkhaz side, it describes an alternative approach to the settlement or transformation of the protracted conflict. Its weak arguments are all too easy to criticize: some of them are obviously unacceptable, while others can be discussed. The document says nothing about Russia's “positive” role in the settlement process, but describes Georgia's efforts to “squeeze” Russia out of the peace process counterproductive. At the same time, the document says a lot about Abkhazia's intention to begin integration in the Black Sea and European expanses. There is another highly interesting point: the document suggests that Georgia should accompany its democratic changes with voluntary revision of the past errors and an apology to the Abkhaz for the state policy of assimilation, wars, and isolation in order to upgrade the level of mutual trust.

To usher in a new stage of conflict settlement, Georgia should lift the political and economic pressure on Abkhazia together with the economic and information blockade. The document holds Georgia responsible for the war of 1992-1993.

Confidence-building measures should be strengthened to bring the process to a new, higher level. Abkhazia's current concerns with Georgia's intensive militarization, which are totally justified, can be relieved only through reliable measures that will rule out armed clashes. Adequate moves should be prompt: today the country's militarization fans belligerency in the Georgian political class and the public which is spreading far and wide and making the Abkhaz even more suspicious.

## GUAM and Conflict Settlement

The above has clearly demonstrated that GUAM will have to work hard to find a point from which it can steadily move toward peaceful settlement. The Chisinau summit bred justified ambitions in the GUAM members, allowing them to influence the conflict settlement according to their interests. Since that time on, GUAM became deeply involved in setting up a peacekeeping battalion. On 18-19 June, 2007 Baku hosted a regular summit of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM, which clarified the issue. The summit “confirmed that active and concerted

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<sup>22</sup> [[http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/sps/648830C5AF867590C32574040046B653](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/sps/648830C5AF867590C32574040046B653)].

efforts should continue to settle the conflict according to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of the states' borders recognized by the international community."<sup>23</sup>

From the very beginning, since May 1996 when the GUAM principles were first formulated, the organization has been propelled forward by the idea of a Eurasian transportation corridor and its secure exploitation. The new structure, which appeared, among other things, for military-political reasons, did not concern itself with specific military-political issues. At the Yalta summit, for example, which took place on 6-7 June, 2001, the members rejected a military-political future for their organization and pointed out that confrontation with Russia and the CIS was unacceptable.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, S. Pirozhkov and B. Parakhonskiy pointed out in their joint report entitled "Building a Regional Cooperation Model in the GUUAM System:" "The meeting of the defense ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova held in January 1999 in Baku discussed the draft Agreement on Setting up a Joint Peacekeeping Unit to maintain and establish peace and international security."<sup>25</sup> Even "sluggishly developing" GUAM was not alien to military-political ideas; it was the structure's too "diverse" composition that interfered with movement in this direction. It seems that the budding ideas of a military alliance inside GUUAM scared Uzbekistan away. President of Uzbekistan Karimov wrote in his letter that his country was not quite satisfied with "the organization's accent on settling the frozen conflicts, setting up joint armed blocs, and revising the functioning security systems."<sup>26</sup>

After the Color Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, movement toward a joint military unit accelerated. Today Georgia and especially Ukraine have accumulated enough experience of peacekeeping operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo, which means they will find it easier to set up a similar structure at home. In August 2006, representatives of the defense ministries and general staffs of the armed forces of Georgia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan arrived in Tbilisi to outline the contours of a joint military unit that will comprise of military contingents from each of the member countries. Defense Minister of Ukraine Anatoli Gritsenko, who attended the meeting, said: "If it is set up, the GUAM peacekeeping contingent will carry out tasks under U.N. or OSCE mandates."<sup>27</sup> In February 2007, Secretary General of the ODED—GUAM Valery Chechelashvili pointed out: "Today we are working on a draft treaty of the GUAM member states for setting up a joint peacekeeping military and civilian-political structure. The treaty will allow GUAM to use its joint military and police forces in humanitarian and peacekeeping operations under the aegis of international organizations."<sup>28</sup> The treaty was signed at the GUAM summit held in Baku on 18-19 June, 2007. It was decided that the peacekeeping battalion would consist of mechanized platoons with support services for communication and control. According to Defense Minister of Ukraine Gritsenko, the GUAM peacekeeping unit will be about 530-strong.<sup>29</sup>

So far the talks about the peacekeeping units have not been translated into practical steps: the summits are merely discussing the issue; and the initial drive is petering out. President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko offered the following comment after the Baku summit: "There are partners that do not reject the issue but merely have different ideas about it."<sup>30</sup> This means that some of our partners remain in two minds about a joint peacekeeping contingent within GUAM. The president refused to specify. Koba Liklakadze, a Georgian military expert, was more outspoken: "Moldova's position is not quite clear. Under its Constitution, it is a neutral country, which makes its potential involvement

<sup>23</sup> [<http://www.guam.org.ua/274.748.0.0.1.0.phtml>].

<sup>24</sup> TURAN, 19 April, 2005.

<sup>25</sup> [[http://www.niurr.gov.ua/ru/conference/sevastopol\\_conf/pirozkhov\\_parahonsky.htm](http://www.niurr.gov.ua/ru/conference/sevastopol_conf/pirozkhov_parahonsky.htm)]

<sup>26</sup> *Ekho* (Baku), 7 May, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> [<http://www.regnum.ru/news/690326.html>].

<sup>28</sup> [<http://www.legal.az/content/view/1617/55/>].

<sup>29</sup> [<http://www.day.az/print/news/politics/83498.html>].

<sup>30</sup> [<http://www.civil.ge/rus/article.php?id=13788>].



in the peacekeeping battalion doubtful. Azerbaijan is also in a difficult situation: its president is between two fires. On the one hand, he would like to carry on what his father began. GUAM can be described as the brainchild of Heydar Aliiev and Eduard Shevardnadze. On the other, he does not want unnecessary tension with Russia.<sup>31</sup> In June 2008, Tbilisi will host another summit, but the approaches to the GUAM Peacekeeping Battalion remain vague. None of the member countries ratified the Baku decision on the peacekeeping battalion. We know, however, that the unit will not be concentrated in one single place: its national parts will be stationed in the corresponding countries. The headquarters will take shape when the national units have been finally formed.<sup>32</sup> If the situation is still the same by the Tbilisi summit, the GUAM peacekeeping battalion will be incorporated into other international peacekeeping forces.

Even on paper the idea draws negative responses from Russia and the Georgian breakaway regions. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov said the following: "These 'peacekeeping services' offered by an obviously biased structure cannot invite adequate responses from the sides involved in the conflict resolution. It is only natural that Russia insists on political methods of conflict settlement and adequately responds to these developments."<sup>33</sup> By "adequate responses" Sergey Ivanov probably meant the absolutely unacceptable position of Georgia's separatist regions that objects to any changes in the peacekeeping format. International rules forbid replacement of the peacekeeping contingent or its mixing with other forces without the consent or at the request of all sides involved in the conflict. The Abkhaz and Ossetian sides insist that the Russian peacekeepers are coping with the mandate and resolutely object to their replacement. President of the self-proclaimed Republic of Abkhazia Sergey Bagapsh said: "Our position remains the same: despite the demands of Georgia or the international community, Abkhazia will stand firm: the Russian peacekeepers should remain on its territory."<sup>34</sup> Here is what Foreign Minister of the self-proclaimed Republic of Abkhazia Sergey Shamba has to say on the issue: "Any interference into the already functioning format of the Georgian-Abkhaz settlement might destroy the rather fragile negotiation process. The implications could be grave... When Georgia tried to alter the format of the peacekeeping operation we found ourselves in an impasse and the negotiation process ground to a standstill."<sup>35</sup>

Negative statements and unacceptable positions are not Russia's only weapon. It has other levers of influence and control. In April 2005, for example, the leaders of the three unrecognized republics—Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria—met in Sukhumi. The meeting was timed to coincide with the Chisinau GUUAM summit. On the summit's eve large-scale military training exercises were launched in Abkhazia involving all the forces and services (aviation, tanks, and the navy). This means that the GUAM members should not merely build up their military component; they should set up a security and development system alternative to the Russian offering better conditions for the separatist regions.

UNOMIG is one of the structures that guarantee support of the CIS Peacekeeping Forces and positively assesses their presence in the resolutions and reports to the U.N. This means that if GUAM wants to replace these forces or mix them with other structures it should lay convincing arguments on the table in favor of the idea and demonstrate that the GUAM peacekeepers will be more effective than the CIS forces.

GUAM can also promote conflict settlement in Georgia at the international level. The draft resolution of the 61st Session of the U.N. General Assembly on Protracted Conflicts in the GUAM Area and their Implications for International Peace, Security and Development is one of the positive exam-

<sup>31</sup> [[http://www.1news.az/articles.php?item\\_id=20070627050421428&sec\\_id=7](http://www.1news.az/articles.php?item_id=20070627050421428&sec_id=7)].

<sup>32</sup> [<http://www.day.az/print/news/politics/88511.html>].

<sup>33</sup> [[www.regnum.ru/news/710566.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/710566.html)].

<sup>34</sup> [<http://www.newsgeorgia.ru/geo1/20070301/41890958.html>].

<sup>35</sup> [<http://www.newsgeorgia.ru/geo1/20070301/41890327.html>].

ples of this sort of international involvement that should be tapped to the full. If adopted, the resolution will allow the GUAM members to raise the conflict issue to a qualitatively new level. Russia habitually dismisses this sort of action as counterproductive and destructive, yet such steps lead to new, more constructive and much more up-to-date models of cooperation in conflict management. So far the draft has not been adopted; much is being done to convince the General Assembly to support the resolution on the frozen conflicts. These efforts will be transferred to PACE.

The Tbilisi summit of June 2008 will probably discuss the extent to which the GUAM members are unanimous in their approaches to the conflict settlement, or should collective efforts be balanced out with individual involvement?