

## INSTITUTIONAL MEDIATION OF THE CONFLICTS IN THE CAUCASUS

Hanna SHELEST

*Ph.D. (Political Science), Senior Researcher,  
Odessa Branch of the National Institute for Strategic Studies  
(Odessa, Ukraine)*

### *Introduction*

The peaceful settlement of international conflicts has gained strong support and recognition as one of the fundamental principles of international relations. Different means and methods of mediation have been used by practitioners over the years. As a form of conflict management and peaceful settlement, mediation is very much in line with contemporary international relations. In the present-day interconnected multi-state system, which includes a lot of broken agreements and unstructured conflicts, prevention or taking only one side may lead to a future struggle, or states may act only in their own interests and not always agree to enter negotiations. In such situations, mediation may be the only viable option the sides are willing to accept.

Conflicting parties usually face two questions: should they accept mediation and, if yes, whose mediation should they accept? Parties agree to mediation, expecting that it will work in their interests. One of the most widespread motives, in our opinion, is the expectation that the mediator can reach a better result than the one that might ensue if the conflict continues.

In this article, we propose a classification of mediation based on the principle of subjectivity. World history and mediation practice have proven that, in most situations, the main factor influencing the decision to accept or not accept mediation is the individuality of the mediator and its subjectivity. We provide a classification based on whether the mediator is an individual, state, or international organization. In this particular article, we will talk only about institutional mediation through the prism of peaceful settlement of the conflicts in Caucasian states—Georgia and Azerbaijan. Institutional mediation is mediation initiated by an international organization or institution.

Nowadays this type of mediation is the most developed for a number of objective and subjective reasons. The subjective reasons include perception of the international organization as an impartial, even neutral side that represents the opinion of many countries and does not follow its own interests, except for the attempt to restore peace and security in the region. The objective reasons are the availability of more instruments

of persuasion, mechanisms of mediation, and resources for fulfilling the mediation mission, as well as international legal and institutional consolidation of the mission. Moreover, as practice has shown, the specific features of the international organization's work do not have a decisive influence on the effectiveness of the mediation efforts.

Indeed, when talking about institutional mediation, we must first consider the United Nations. For a long time it was the only organization that took responsibility for restoring peace in the world. Later, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe began taking responsibility in the respective region. Recently the European Union has begun realizing its capabilities and responsibility in Europe, particularly in the Black Sea region.

In point of fact, mediation by an international organization can take two forms: direct diplomatic mediation and peace operations. At the end of the 20th century, peace operations stopped being purely military operations. With the addition of a civilian component, as well as specific functions, peace missions have begun to act more and more as mediators.

The mediator should be able to explain to the warring parties why it is intervening in peaceful settlement of the conflict. Given the situation, this is much easier for international organizations to do. In many situations, mediation is mostly procedural, helping to establish a framework in which negotiations can take place. In these circumstances, the impartiality of the mediator is a characteristic complimented by all warring par-

ties. Reality confirms that very seldom can the mediator be neutral, but the level of trust of the conflicting sides depends on the mediator's objectivity and equal attitude toward them, which results in whether or not they accept the mediator's proposals and their level of cooperation with it.

The Caucasian sub-region emerged on the international arena after the collapse of the Soviet Union with a series of so-called ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. From the very beginning, they attracted the attention of the world community, provoking various mediation and peacekeeping efforts. Despite the efforts of individual states and international organizations, the prospect of these conflicts being settled cannot yet be seen.

Despite the "frozen" state of the conflicts in the Caucasus and the limited possibilities of the international organizations acting as peacekeepers, they are still perceived as the best candidates for the role of mediators, as most of the countries, such as the Russian Federation, the U.S., and Turkey, have either lost their credibility or are perceived as one of the parties involved.

The recent Russian-Georgian conflict of 2008 and recognition by the Russian Federation of the independence of two former Georgian territories did not lead to any dramatic changes in the security situation in the region. Nevertheless, it revealed the limited possibilities of the international organizations already acting as mediators and peacekeepers in the region (the U.N., the CIS, and the OSCE), as well as the growing potential of the European Union as a peace broker.

## The United Nations

*The Georgian-Abkhazian conflict* escalated into a series of armed confrontations in the summer of 1992. A ceasefire agreement was reached on 3 September, 1992 in Moscow by the Republic of Georgia, the leadership of Abkhazia, and the Russian Federation. The agreement stipulated that "the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia shall be ensured." However, the agreement was never fully implemented.

The United Nations sought to revive the peace process by diplomatic means, consulting with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to ensure effective coordination of activities. In November 1992, a United Nations office opened in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi to provide

an integrated United Nations approach in the region and to assist in the peacemaking efforts of the Secretary-General. In May 1993, the Secretary-General appointed a Special Envoy for Georgia. His first mission to the region reaffirmed that all parties supported the active role of the United Nations in reaching a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

On 14 May, 1994, after several rounds of difficult negotiations chaired by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, the Georgian and Abkhaz sides signed in Moscow the Agreement on a Ceasefire and Separation of Forces. The parties agreed to the deployment of a peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to monitor compliance with the Agreement, with UNOMIG monitoring implementation of the agreement and observing the operation of the CIS forces.<sup>1</sup>

As for the political settlement process, in 1994, the U.N. initiated what came to be known as the Geneva process. After languishing for some years, it was revived in 1997. A new Coordinating Council composed of Georgia, Abkhazia, Russia, and the U.N. was set up to serve as the main forum for negotiations. The "Group of Friends of the U.N. Secretary-General for Georgia" (America, Britain, France, Germany, and Russia) and the OSCE participated as observers. However, little progress was made as the talks were bogged down in "negotiations about negotiations."<sup>2</sup> The 2001 Boden plan—a settlement proposal elaborated by the U.N. Secretary-General's Representative for Georgia and the Group of Friends—was rejected by Sukhumi.<sup>3</sup>

The summer of 2008 became a critical moment for the mediation efforts of the U.N. and the OSCE. Despite the Six-Point Agreement, in June 2009 the Russian Federation vetoed prolongation of the U.N. Mission in Abkhazia and the OSCE Mission in South Ossetia. The Geneva process has remained the only instrument for the mediation efforts of these respected organizations.

*The Nagorno-Karabakh* conflict erupted in 1988 from a decision of the Regional Council of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region (NKAR) to appeal to the Supreme Councils of the U.S.S.R., Azerbaijan, and Armenia to authorize the secession of NKAO from Azerbaijan and its attachment to Armenia. By 1990 the conflict had developed into a full-scale confrontation.

The U.N. appeared to be less interested in settlement of the conflict than was expected and limited its role in conflict resolution to political statements by the Security Council. However, the U.N. never elaborated new models and measures to handle the conflict. The actions undertaken by the U.N. were limited to fact-finding missions in Nagorno-Karabakh, serving as the main source for the UNSC political statements regarding the situation. The positions expressed in these political statements were usually seen as favoring one of the conflicting parties and very soon the U.N. as a mediating instance became discredited for all parties—Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, and Azerbaijan.<sup>4</sup>

## The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

*The Georgian-South Ossetian* conflict broke out toward the end of 1990. In 1992, Georgia accepted a ceasefire to avoid a large-scale confrontation with Russia, which unofficially supported

<sup>1</sup> See: "United Nations Mission in Georgia," available at [<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomig/background.html>].

<sup>2</sup> B. Coppieters, "Introduction," in: Federal Practice, ed. by B. Coppieters, D. Darchiashvili, N. Akaba, VUB Press, Brussels, 2000, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> See: N. Tocci, *The EU and Conflict Resolution: Promoting Peace in the Backyard*, Routledge, London, 2007, p. 129.

<sup>4</sup> See: K. Barseghyan, Z. Karaev, "Playing the Cat-and-Mouse: Conflict and Third Party Mediation in Post-Soviet Space," *The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Fall 2004, p. 201, available at [[http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/6\\_1n-k.pdf](http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/6_1n-k.pdf)].

the South Ossetian side. In November 1992, the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), later the OSCE, deployed a mission to Georgia. The OSCE Mission promoted negotiations between the conflicting parties in the zone of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict (1992), and supported the U.N.-led peace process in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict (1993). Since 1993 the OSCE has been monitoring the security situation, engaging in field diplomacy, encouraging impetus in negotiations between the sides, and working on building confidence between the communities to help prepare the way for peaceful settlement of the conflict.<sup>5</sup>

The reason for the OSCE dealing with Ossetia and the U.N. with Abkhazia was due to the way in which both conflicts ended. The Russian Federation established the Ossetian ceasefire, and a Joint Control Commission (Russia, North Ossetia, South Ossetia, and Georgia) was set up to work out a final settlement. OSCE was invited to act as an observer on the JCC from the beginning. Abkhazia was resolved through mediation by Friends of the U.N. Secretary General (Russia, U.K., France, and Germany) and the U.N. Mission was established to carry forward the negotiating process, including Georgia and Abkhazia. Although both the U.N. and OSCE Missions had different mandates, the cooperation that developed between the two Missions was very helpful in looking at different approaches to conflict settlement and learning from each other's experiences.

To help stabilize the security situation and create a more favorable context for political dialog, the Mission carried forward several initiatives to build confidence between the sides. These included programs on: economic and infrastructure rehabilitation, civic society and human rights development through small grants for nongovernmental organizations, training for journalists reporting on conflict, to promote unbiased media coverage of events. Since 1994, the Mission has liaised with the U.N. operations in Abkhazia to follow events closely.<sup>6</sup>

The OSCE as a mediator tried to mediate not only the warring parties, but also the various mediation and peacekeeping efforts in the region. So the OSCE Mission increased its influence in the JCC over the years and managed to include the European Commission in the meetings. Various settlement proposals were put forward and from 2006 onwards an economic rehabilitation plan was launched involving both sides. In addition to political mediation and conflict resolution, the OSCE dealt with so-called mediation on the ground, discussing possibilities for the implementation of various economic and infrastructural projects. A number of proposals for autonomy within Georgia for South Ossetia were also tabled and discussed, but this has not led to a final settlement.

From 2006 onwards the Georgian Government appeared to be in a hurry to resolve the dispute in its own favor—the creation of a parallel administration, the heightened rhetoric, and the construction of a major military base in Gori were evidence of this. At the same time, the OSCE took a longer-term view and wanted to use the economic program to build confidence between the communities. The Mission curtailed its activity in June 2009 due to the Russian Federation's refusal to prolong its mandate.

*In Nagorno-Karabakh*, the OSCE de facto appeared as the only mediator and peace builder at the early stages of the conflict development. Being itself in the process of transformation from the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe to the Organization, as well as its enlargement due to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the U.S.S.R., the OSCE tried to take on the new role of mediator in a region where it did not have any previous experience or close connections with the parties in the conflict. The Karabakh intervention marked the first time in history that the OSCE committed itself to resolving a conflict as a mediator in a peace conference.

The Helsinki Additional Meeting of the CSCE Council on 24 March, 1992 requested the Chairman in Office to convene a conference on Nagorno-Karabakh as soon as possible under the auspices

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<sup>5</sup> See: "OSCE Mission to Georgia," available at [<http://www.osce.org/georgia/33133.html>].

<sup>6</sup> See: "OSCE Mission to Georgia," available at [<http://www.osce.org/georgia/16289.html>].

of the CSCE to provide an ongoing forum for negotiations toward a peaceful settlement of the crisis on the basis of the principles, commitments, and provisions of the CSCE. The Conference was to take place in Minsk. Although it has not been possible to hold the conference to date, the so-called Minsk Group spearheads the OSCE's efforts to find a political solution to this conflict. Its tasks are: to provide an appropriate framework for conflict resolution in the way of assuring the negotiation process supported by the Minsk Group; to obtain conclusion by the Parties of an agreement on the cessation of the armed conflict in order to permit the convening of the Minsk Conference; and to promote the peace process by deploying OSCE multinational peacekeeping forces.<sup>7</sup> The Minsk Process is supported by the Minsk Group that is co-chaired by France, the Russian Federation, and the United States, which was a compromise between the different views of the conflicting parties.

The OSCE planned measures but almost always failed to implement them. While the main barriers to the UNSC's effective involvement in peacebuilding can be found in its political nature, the main constraints to the OSCE's effective policy can be found in the lack of resources, as well as in its organizational and procedural gaps. It was unable to mobilize any diplomatic, political, or military mechanisms to maintain the cease-fire agreements.<sup>8</sup> From the very beginning, the CSCE's lack of experience with these type of conflicts and reduced solidarity among its members, combined with Russia's regional ambitions and Turkey's advocacy role serve to weaken the intervention.<sup>9</sup>

Also, Russia's special envoy to the Minsk Group started applying shuttle diplomacy between the conflicting parties. However, in contrast to other contributing peace efforts in the region, Russia's role undermined the CSCE's role and caused confusion among the parties and the mediators.<sup>10</sup> An Armenian diplomat said: "It is easier to bring the positions of Baku and Erevan closer to each other than to reach an agreement between the mediators—Russia and the Minsk Group."<sup>11</sup>

Between 1994 and 2008, the Minsk group presented several proposals for a stable peace settlement, which were rejected either by Azerbaijan or by Armenia. The three proposals were; package plan, step by step plan and finally common state proposal. After the rejection of these three main proposals the OSCE changed its negotiation strategy in 1999. It started giving more priority to face-to-face meetings between Azerbaijani and Armenian officials.<sup>12</sup>

## The European Union

In its report in 2006 on the EU's Role in Conflict Resolution in the Southern Caucasus, the International Crisis Group mentioned that "yet, the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts have the potential to ignite into full-fledged wars in Europe's neighborhood. To guarantee its own security, the EU should become more engaged in efforts to resolve the three disputes. It can do so by strengthening the conflict resolution dimension of the instruments it applies."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See: "Minsk Process," available at [<http://www.osce.org/item/21979.html>].

<sup>8</sup> See: K. Barseghyan and Z. Karaev, op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>9</sup> See: M. Mooradian, D. Druckman, "Hurting Stalemate or Mediation? The Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, 1990-95," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 36, No. 6, 1999, pp. 709-727.

<sup>10</sup> See: B. Başer, "Third Party Mediation in Nagorno-Karabakh: Part of the Cure or Part of the Disease?," *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies (JCACS)*, Vol. 3, No. 5, 2008, p. 93.

<sup>11</sup> B. Coppieters, "Conclusions: The Caucasus As a Security Complex," in: *Contested Borders in Caucasus*, ed. by B. Coppieters, VUB University Press, Brussels, 1996, p. 202.

<sup>12</sup> See: B. Başer, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>13</sup> *Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role*, International Crisis Group, Europe Report No. 173, 20 March, 2006.

In 2003, the EU appointed the first European Union Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus. Peter Semneby has held this post since 2006 and has managed to raise the profile of the position considerably, notably through his hands-on engagement in Georgia. He was a more visible EU actor in the country than the Commission delegation, even though he was not permanently stationed in the country. The principal objectives of his mandate have been to “prevent conflicts in the region” and to “contribute to the peaceful settlement of conflicts.”<sup>14</sup> However, he has been given few means to achieve these objectives. He has not been authorized to act as mediator between the conflict parties, nor has he been given any strong material leverage to exert influence on them. His main role has been to act as the local relay of EU messages designed to moderate the conflictual behavior of the parties and to persuade them to reinvigorate their search for a negotiated settlement. He has held political dialog with the parties to the conflict and other interested actors such as the U.N., the OSCE and the U.N. Group of Friends.<sup>15</sup>

The EU member states also played a prominent role in the Group of Friends of the U.N. Secretary-General for Georgia. In 2005, the EU states, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, as well as applicants Romania and Bulgaria, formed an informal group—the New Friends of Georgia. They acted not as mediators but as policy advocates, making the case for, among other things, a greater EU role in negotiations to resolve the frozen conflicts and in the internationalization of peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Also, they advocated putting pressure on Moscow to constrain it to reduce its military posture.

At the beginning of June 2008, High Representative for the CFSP Javier Solana visited Georgia and Abkhazia in order to signal the Union’s resolve to inject new momentum into the resolution of the conflicts. The Georgian President, in turn, toured the key EU capitals at the end of the same month in an attempt to persuade the EU to put pressure on Moscow to stop undermining Georgia’s territorial integrity. About a week later, it was German Foreign Minister Steinmeier, acting as coordinator of the Group of Friends, who sought to calm the situation. He flew into Tbilisi and Sukhumi to present a peace plan to Georgia and Abkhazia, which had been previously discussed with Moscow.

The EU’s role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding has evolved in response to the changes in the international system, the EU’s own internal political dynamics, and the EU’s capacity and willingness to play a major role in regional and international conflicts.<sup>16</sup> This opinion describes why de facto the European Union was not active in the peace process until 2008, providing mostly confidence-building measures in the region. The EU, generally more comfortable with a post-conflict rehabilitation and peacebuilding role, has been wary of becoming directly involved in conflict resolution. Yet, it could offer added value to the efforts of the U.N. and OSCE.<sup>17</sup>

Nicu Popescu stated that over the years, the EU spent over EUR 30 million before 2008 on post-conflict reconstruction around the conflict zones of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but failed to develop a political and security strategy vis-à-vis these conflicts. The EU spent money on the conflict zones in the hope of promoting reconciliation between the parties to the conflicts, but also to become more influential in the conflict resolution efforts.<sup>18</sup> Here we can raise a reasonable question as to whether a promoter of peace is a mediator? The breakout of the war demonstrated the inadequacy of EU conflict prevention and management policies in the region. Despite significant fund-

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<sup>14</sup> Council Joint Action 2006/121/CFSP of 20 February, 2006 appointing the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, *OJ* 2006 L 49/14.

<sup>15</sup> See: M. Merlingen, R. Ostrauskaite, “EU Peacebuilding in Georgia: Limits and Achievements,” Centre for the Law of EU External Relations, CLEER Working Papers, 2009/6, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> See: M. Bardakçı, “EU Engagement in Conflict Resolution In Georgia: Towards A More Proactive Role,” *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 4 (3), Summer 2010, available at [[http://cria-online.org/12\\_2.html](http://cria-online.org/12_2.html) - pp. 214-236].

<sup>17</sup> See: *Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU’s Role*, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> See: N. Popescu, “The EU’s Conflict Prevention Failure in Georgia,” *CACI Analyst*, 14 October, 2009.

ing disbursed to mitigate the consequences of the conflicts, EU assistance could not replace a political and security strategy for conflict prevention. The deterioration of the security situation on the ground quickly invalidated the potentially stabilizing effect of EU financial efforts to promote long-term conflict resolution.<sup>19</sup> In this situation, the main motive of the EU involvement as a mediator in 2008 was restoration of its reputation in the region and gaining back those positions it pretended to have there.

Sometimes we can witness substitution of notions, when other actions classified as peacebuilding or prevention are called mediation. So, before 2008, the EU played the role of a sponsor for peacebuilding, reconstruction, and restoring confidence between the parties. All these indirectly influenced the possible settlement of the conflict, but were not mediation itself, as they mostly dealt with people-to-people relations.

While the U.N. and the OSCE thus have to be counted among the losers of the Russia-Georgia conflict of 2008, the EU, somewhat unexpectedly, was able to impose itself as peacemaker. Due to the policy entrepreneurship of the French Presidency, the EU played the key role in bringing the short war to an end, in monitoring the ceasefire, and in leading the international talks that were convened to deal with the fall-out from the conflict. Since then, Georgia has been the theater with the most EU institutional actors on the ground.<sup>20</sup>

The week of the military actions and mediation of the European Union headed by President of France N. Sarkozy led to the signing of the Six-Point Agreement. At the beginning of September, the EU and Russia agreed that Russian forces would withdraw from the areas adjacent to the break-away republics within 10 days of the deployment of an EU Monitoring Mission in the conflict area.<sup>21</sup> The agreement de facto designated the EU as guarantor of peace in Georgia. With this agreement, the EU first started acting as an official mediator among Tbilisi, Moscow, Tskhinvali, and Sukhumi. Still in the preparatory phase, the EU decided to limit its mediation to issues related to conflict management, as opposed to conflict resolution. This was the result of a realistic assessment on the part of the EU of the dim prospects of a genuine peace conference along the lines of the Dayton negotiations on Bosnia.<sup>22</sup>

Political dialog is one of the main foreign policy instruments of the EU. It used it to incorporate it into the management and resolution of the territorial conflicts in Georgia. It sought to moderate the conflictual behavior of the parties and to change their attitudes and negotiation positions. But in 2008 the overall impact of political dialog on the peace process was marginal. This had to do with the fact that the EU failed to create sufficient leverage over the conflict parties that would have enabled it to broker peace. In particular, it proved incapable of using policies of conditionality. In the opinion of Michael Merlingen, in the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, such policies were excluded because the EU did not have official relations with them.<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to agree with this, as absence of official recognition did not stop the EU in the cases of Palestine and Kosovo. At the same time, divisions among Member States made it impossible for the EU to make its relations with Russia conditional on Moscow's willingness to settle the frozen conflicts.

The EU engagement in and around the conflicts involving Georgia is best described as negotiation cum mediation. Broadly speaking, the EU negotiates with Georgia and Russia independently on their bilateral agendas with the EU, including on questions relevant to the conflicts. In addition to this, the EU mediates between the sides to Georgia's conflicts. The negotiation exercise has in a sense framed

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<sup>19</sup> See: *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> See: M. Merlingen, R. Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> The 8 September, 2008 agreement, detailing the implementation of the 12 August, 2008 six-point plan, available at [[http://ambafrance-us.org/IMG/pdf/mise\\_en\\_oeuvre\\_plan\\_12\\_aout\\_2008.pdf](http://ambafrance-us.org/IMG/pdf/mise_en_oeuvre_plan_12_aout_2008.pdf)].

<sup>22</sup> See: M. Merlingen, R. Ostrauskaite, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> See: *Ibid.*, p. 13.

the context of these mediation efforts. The EU's strength is in its multiple roles, mandates and engagement on different levels—although the EU has not always been able to capitalize on this.<sup>24</sup>

In the field of international peace mediation, the perceived context of the international system (conflicts, issues, parties) and the identity of the mediator shape the form and character of mediation. It is important to stress the reciprocal influence of each of these factors, which determine the shape of the EU's international peace mediation efforts.<sup>25</sup>

Our main argument is that the peace process in Georgia has failed because third-party interveners such as the EU have allowed a huge gap to open up between their role as “apolitical” peace builders and their role as politically engaged peace brokers.<sup>26</sup> After the Russian-Georgian crisis of 2008, the EU should not only learn the lessons, but also elaborate a clear policy toward other regional conflicts, first of all Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria.

## Conclusions

Prior to the 2008 summer war, the main third-party interveners in the Caucasian territorial conflicts were the United Nations and the OSCE. The EU played a secondary role, although it began to increase its contribution to the future peace process. This policy upgrade notwithstanding, Brussels neither had an operational role with regard to peacekeeping forces in the two break-away republics nor was it a member of the principal multilateral negotiation formats dealing with the management and resolution of the conflicts—the JCC and the Geneva process.<sup>27</sup>

However the situation has changed, and it came not only from the external conditions in which the EU appeared after the latest round of enlargement, but also from an internal understanding of the changing role of the EU, the need to take greater responsibility in world affairs, and a certain accommodation of the different national policies toward the crisis regions. A rather general view existed that the practice of mediation is of added value to the EU in its role as a regional actor in conflict resolution. Although international peace and security is to some extent viewed as falling under the remit of the U.N., there is a perceived added value of the EU in peace mediation, as it can act as an alternative player. Other regional organizations see the EU as more their equal than the U.N., for instance, and it provides an alternative to the wider internationalization of a conflict.<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, one of the main challenges to institutional mediation today is that a mandate of the international organization can be stopped at any time and the mission recalled. This happened with the United Nations Mission in Georgia in 2008, when one of the Security Council's permanent members—Russia—vetoed prolongation of the mission, as well as with the OSCE Mission to Georgia in 2009, for the same reason. The second weak point of international organizations as mediators is the everlasting balance that must be maintained between the national interests of the member states and the general mission of the organization, which is a usual problem for the European Union.

Today international organizations can act de facto as mediators in two directions—either as “builders” or “gardeners.” Both create something. However, whereas “builders” creating a structure for future peace very often find themselves blocked in those frames they have created, “gardeners”

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<sup>24</sup> See: M. Frichova Grono, “Georgia's Conflicts: What Role for the EU as Mediator?,” IFP Mediation Cluster, *International Alert*, March 2010, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> See: A. Herrberg, “Perceptions of International Peace Mediation in the EU,” The Crisis Management Initiative, November 2008, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> See: M. Merlingen, R. Ostrauskaite, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> See: Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> See: A. Herrberg, op. cit., p. 14.



create conditions in which peace can develop and “grow” constantly, de facto setting conditions for its full-fledged existence. In the conflicts in the Caucasian states, international organizations mostly act as “builders,” creating frames and constructing conditions that do not have a significant influence on the peace process itself, so they cannot go beyond the boundaries they have created themselves.

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