

14<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE IN THE SERIES  
ASPECTS OF THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ CONFLICT

GEORGIAN NATO ACCESSION  
AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON  
THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ PEACE PROCESS



Istanbul, Turkey, June 14-15, 2007

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California, Irvine

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# GEORGIAN NATO ACCESSION AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ PEACE PROCESS

Conference report

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## Introductory Remarks of the Organizers

Since the events that transpired in the Kodori Gorge in the summer of 2007 official negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations and the Geneva Process have seen no progress. Relations between the two sides were further aggravated in the fall of 2007 by incidents in border zones. These events have also strained informal civil society dialogues. Organizers and supporters of these dialogues from both sides are criticized by their governments and domestic political opponents who maintain that such dialogues are ineffective.

In this context two issues important to international politics play an important role: the decision about the future internationally recognized status of Kosovo, and the possible accession of Georgia into NATO within this decade. Both these issues provoke serious political controversies and contradictory political analysis between and within the conflicting parties. These two topics also evoke emotions which themselves have repercussions on the negotiation process and confidence building between Georgians and Abkhaz. This is particularly the case with NATO accession talks which incite fears or hopes in Abkhaz and Georgian societies.

Consequently, the organizers of this conference offered a forum to their Georgian and Abkhaz partners where the public on both sides of the divide could transparently discuss the requisites and possible consequences of Georgia's accession into NATO among themselves and together with international experts. Fundamental controversies and clashes of interest were not expected to be resolved at this conference, but the discussions and resulting conference report, policy recommendations, and published proceedings (in press) helped clarify the issues, and provided insights into the motivations and interests behind the different positions.



Of the 26 participants 7 were Georgians, and 7 were Abkhaz. None of these participants has direct political responsibility, but they all have authority in their fields as social scientists, journalists, advisors and NGO representatives. The other 12 participants were international experts, including representatives from NATO, the European Union, think tanks, universities and NGOs in Europe and the United States. This was the first time that people from Abkhazia had an opportunity to meet a NATO representative. All participants spoke on their own behalf, not that of their organizations. Please see the complete list of participants in the Appendix.

Those who participated in the conference support the principle that it is better to talk with each other than past one another. They all hold the conviction that both sides of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict have earned the right to have their perspective heard in a respectful manner. Both sides are legitimate and necessary partners in the search for solutions to this conflict. They believe that after everything that has happened in the past few decades in the Georgian-Abkhaz relationship the only worthy alternative is a settlement without war.

The conference theme—the impact of possible NATO accession of Georgia—is an extremely delicate issue for both Georgians and Abkhaz. The overwhelming majority of Georgians support NATO integration and hope to achieve this as fast as possible in order to preserve Georgia’s independence by anchoring itself to the West. They consider early accession into NATO as a foregone conclusion. Voices from the region and the West expressing doubts are not welcome. For some Georgians it seems ridiculous to discuss such a highly sensitive issue with the opponents from Abkhazia.

This theme is also problematic for the Abkhaz participants. Many people in Abkhazia already regard meetings with Georgians in today’s tense political situation as suspect. Furthermore, how will they consider a meeting joined by NATO representatives, an alliance that many in Abkhazia regard as a staunch supporter of the Georgian position with its enormous military, political and economic power. From an Abkhaz perspective Russia is justified in admonishing possible NATO expansion into the South Caucasus as dangerous and aggressive.

This is the fourth conference co-organized by our Georgian and Abkhaz colleagues, the Heinrich-Boell Foundation, and the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding at the University of California. The project was started by the University of California, Irvine in 1994, a year after the Abkhaz-Georgian ceasefire. That year it seemed that ten years or more would be needed before ordinary Georgians and Abkhaz would sit in the same room, let alone have a frank and constructive dialogue. Fortunately, it only took a few years for that to happen.

If we look back to where we were when this project began in 1994 and see where we are today, 13 years later, it shows dramatically how long it takes to get back to some kind of normalcy in relations between people after much bloodshed in an armed conflict. Our work is to help facilitate understanding and healing between the communities, but also to prevent any resumption of violence so that the peace process can continue to make steady progress.

All previous 13 conferences have resulted in complete proceedings that are published and distributed throughout the region, and posted online. Today we have a total of thirteen volumes.

The proceedings of these conferences are published in Russian. The previous 13 volumes are at <http://www.socsci.uci.edu/~cpb/progs/projpubs.htm>. This conference has resulted in the 14<sup>th</sup> volume. We recorded all the conversations and transcribed them so that not only the people in the room benefit from the exchange, but also those working at the official level of the peace process, the public at large, and the international community. We hope that this report and our ongoing dialogue project can contribute to a mutually satisfactory solution of this conflict that will meet the needs of all the people affected flict.

The report proceeds with highlights of all the papers presented in the three panels, summaries of the questions, answers and comments made in the discussions by all the participants, detailed policy recommendations, and a list of the participants.

Paula Garb, the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding, University of California, Irvine

Walter Kaufmann, the Heinrich-Boell Foundation, Berlin, Tbilisi

## GEORGIAN NATO ACCESSION AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ PEACE PROCESS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE CONFERENCE REPORT

The conference agenda consisted of three sets of questions. The first set examined **what NATO stands for today, what the perceptions are of NATO in the East and West, what NATO demands of its members and what it guarantees them.** The panelists in the first part of the conference, NATO experts working in France and Germany, Jan Hendrik van Thiel and Susanne Nies, explained the conflicting perceptions of NATO against the background of the organization's unclear identity in the challenging global security environment that has developed since 9/11. They noted that in the West NATO is regarded as an organization that is extending stability and security across the Euro-Atlantic area through enlargement or partnerships. In the East NATO is viewed more as a competing actor whose role is to contain or even roll back Russia. This tension is reflected in discussions around the issue of Georgia's accession into NATO. It is further heightened by tensions over the organization's globalization of its missions and capabilities through global partners outside the Euro-Atlantic region in the face of international terrorism.

Susanne Nies and Jan-Hendrick van Thiel explained that an important NATO guarantee to members is Article 5, which states that if one member is threatened externally the other NATO members must give their support. They also noted that NATO demands its members to commit to the political and economic principles underpinning democracy and to participate in efforts to defend their common security. The panelists could not recall any sanctions used against a NATO member or ally that engaged in action unacceptable to NATO. Panelists talked about how NATO membership has impacted Central European countries such that if they used to regard themselves as the West of the East they now have a somewhat humiliating position as the East of the West. They cited this as a factor in clashes between Poland and the European Union. At the same time it was pointed out that one of the most important assets in being a NATO member is experience in multilateralism, which was completely lacking in the Soviet bloc.

The second set of questions dealt with **how realistic an early accession of Georgia into NATO is and what factors would influence the decision.** Most of the NATO experts at the conference predicted that Georgia would get MAP status (Membership Action Plan) and that the Georgian government's level of cooperation in fulfilling NATO's requirements for reforms indicated that Georgia had a good chance of early accession. The conference was held a few months before the Saakashvili government responded harshly to strong opposition actions, which called into question Georgia's ability to meet the requirements necessary for MAP. This may change after the Georgian presidential elections in January 2008.

The panelist from Russia, Andrey Ryabov, predicted that the current relations of the US and the EU with Russia will have an inhibiting influence on whether Georgia becomes a member

of NATO. He maintained that Russia would not agree in the near future to a shift in the balance of power to the US and NATO, which Russia believes would happen in the South Caucasus if Georgia joins the alliance. The participant from NATO headquarters, James Mackey, responded to this concern by arguing that Russia's economic and political power would always guarantee its importance in these regions, and that Russia stands only to gain from Georgia and its neighbors becoming democratic and thus more stable and reliable partners.

Mackey predicted that if the Georgian government carries out the stipulated reforms and makes an honest effort to pursue peaceful conflict resolution, the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflicts would not act as a veto. The conflicts would not have to be resolved before NATO would accept Georgia. Mackey could not give specific details about how this will be done in practice or when Georgia would get MAP status or NATO membership. He pointed out, however, that "NATO has been quite inventive in thinking about creating solutions to unique problems."

Several international and Georgian participants raised concerns that NATO would overlook substantial faults with the Georgian reform process in its rush to integrate Georgia, and that this would be detrimental both to Georgian society and to NATO. Some international and all the Abkhaz participants criticized NATO for considering Georgia as a potential member given that the country has two unresolved conflicts and a troubled process of democratization. A panelist, Bruno Coppieters, predicted that Georgian accession into NATO before the resolution of the conflicts would prevent violent conflicts between Russia and Georgia, and Abkhazia and Georgia, but would further freeze the Georgian-Abkhaz and the Georgian-Russian conflicts.

The third set of questions focused on **how possible Georgian accession into NATO would impact the Georgian-Abkhaz peace process**. In Georgia the prospect of its entry into NATO raises high hopes for restoration of its territorial integrity. In Abkhazia it conjures up fears. According to the Abkhaz panelist, Vyacheslav Chirikba, the factors that are seen in Abkhazia as a threat if Georgia joins NATO are (1) NATO significantly improves Georgia's military capacity which could lead to Georgia using NATO's political and military might to militarily reintegrate Abkhazia into Georgia; (2) Georgia's entry into NATO before a political settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict would postpone indefinitely Abkhazia's international recognition; (3) Georgia's NATO membership would help remove Russia completely from the South Caucasus and leave Abkhazia without any friendly country in the region, and significantly weaken Abkhazia militarily, politically, and economically.

If Georgia starts to implement the Membership Action Plan (MAP) the Georgian perspective, explained by Shalva Pichkhadze from Georgia, is that (1) the West will persuade Georgia to make compromises to suit Abkhazia in order to reach a settlement; (2) the West will persuade Abkhazia to remain within the framework of reasonable demands; (3) the West will try to make both sides refrain from hostilities, promising them the prospect of European integration. If events develop in this way, Georgia might be forced to give up one of its key demands, the return of refugees/IDPs in the foreseeable future because their mass return is the worst of all possible scenarios for the Abkhaz. If Georgia becomes a NATO member without resolution of

the conflicts (1) the influence of Russia in the conflict regions will decrease (2) Georgia might receive its “carrot” without a “stick” and thus might lose its incentive for compromise, as was the case of Cyprus and EU membership. If events develop in this direction Tbilisi might be tempted to take a more uncompromising position, even with regard to NATO. This might push Tbilisi and the refugees/IDPs toward a more unceremonious attitude towards the Abkhaz, to kindling a revanchistic mood among the refugees/IDPs, and that could provoke interethnic confrontation. A more optimistic Georgian scenario is that with NATO’s help (or the help of countries in NATO, or the EU, or the OSCE) efforts will continue to find mutually satisfactory compromises. Another possible scenario outlined is that Georgia’s entry into NATO would increase asymmetry between the two sides and could threaten the survival of Abkhazia.

All agreed that NATO can play an important role not only by urging Georgia to use only peaceful means to resolve its conflicts, but by giving rigorous and critical feedback to Georgia on how it is doing in the peace process and in democratization. Participants agreed with countries in NATO that believe Georgia should sign a nonaggression statement. All participants expressed enthusiasm for the complementary role that the EU can play with its comprehensive confidence building measures to facilitate increased interaction between Tbilisi and the conflict regions, open up the isolated regions to Europe, and lay the foundations for problem solving through dialogue and cooperation.

The conference concluded with participants recognizing that the difficulties and frustrations of the Georgians and Abkhaz, as well as members of the international community trying to help bring peace to the region are legitimate and understandable. The conflict is complex and the solutions are not simple. Participants also felt that the discussions revealed more questions than answers about the impact that NATO accession would have on the conflict. More clarification is needed in both societies about the role of NATO and the EU, as well as more exposure of these organizations to the realities of Georgian and Abkhaz domestic developments and relations.

The conference resulted in the following policy recommendations:

- Use NATO’s extensive public diplomacy program to better inform the people and their leaders in Georgia/Abkhazia about the organization’s values, principles, and policies.
- Open direct channels of communication between NATO/EU and Abkhaz civil society and Georgian civil society.
- Implement a wide range of confidence building measures through the EU, other regional organizations, and international organizations.
- The EU and EC should consider establishing a European university in Abkhazia.
- Change the official negotiation format within the legal constraints of international organizations in order to concentrate more on a process of creative and constructive efforts toward a mutually satisfactory resolution of the conflict rather than try to fit a prescribed outcome to a process.
- NATO should encourage the Georgian government to sign the declaration on

nonresumption of hostilities, and to refrain from making statements about reserving the right to use force.

- NATO and the EU should encourage the Georgian and Abkhaz authorities to allow officials to participate in nongovernmental Abkhaz-Georgian confidence building meetings.
- NATO officials should seek every opportunity to answer all possible questions that arise about how this process of NATO accession can guarantee peace and stability in the conflict zones.
- Some coordination, a division of labor and synergy is needed between NATO and the EU to promote their agendas in the region.

## PANEL I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF NATO TODAY AND HOW THE ACCESSION PROCESS FUNCTIONS

### PAPER: The Evolution of Perceptions of NATO in the East and West

Jan Henrik van Thiel. French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

...The situation today in this phase of NATO's evolution is characterized by conflicting perceptions against the background of NATO's unclear identity in a new and challenging global security environment. Fundamental changes in recent years are the obvious ones. The terrorist attacks on 9/11 on the twin towers in NY clearly changed the security agenda and put forward the new threat posed by international terrorism, especially if it is linked to weapons of mass destruction, and secondly, more on the political side, the war in Iraq, what was conceived and carried out outside of NATO by a coalition of the willing.



Nevertheless in the picture of perceptions today there are some constant elements in the West. In Europe the perception is that the United States, preferably through NATO, remains necessary for the security of the continent because European allies lack capabilities to tackle new threats like the ones I just described. Europe and between Europe and the United States the perceptions vary significantly. Among the new members of NATO, the former members of the Warsaw Pact, the main perception of NATO is and remains a role of containment of Russia, perhaps, even a hold back of Russia, to guarantee their independence and their anchorage in the West.

In the United States the main perception is that NATO is not necessary to guarantee its own security. The US has all the capabilities to ensure itself. But it might be an instrument to complement its own strategies. If you look more closely, you might identify two phases. One phase is between 2002 and 2005, when the US clearly gave signals to the Europeans that they thought NATO was an instrument of minor importance. The US might go through NATO if it suits the US, or the US would act unilaterally in a coalition of the willing when it was more convenient. NATO in this case was regarded as a tool kit. From 2005 onwards we can identify a second phase of a rebalancing of this attitude, in which the US seems to perceive NATO as an instrument of bigger importance, or even the main instrument to protect its security policy agenda around the world.

“... NATO should get out of its mainly military approach to security and develop civil and civil-military capabilities and approaches to security issues.”

But, and this is important to note, this new perception is based on one condition, that NATO is actually profoundly reformed and transformed. Only then it might play a major role.

I'll give you a few short points. In this respect I see first that NATO has to gain the capabilities to act globally. One thing is enlargement in the area of stability. The other one, and the more controversial one, is the establishment of global partnerships that

can tackle all security threats on a global level. Second, NATO has to have a holistic approach to security. That means NATO should get out of its mainly military approach to security and develop civil and civil-military capabilities and approaches to security issues. And third, of course, to remain relevant in American perceptions NATO needs to develop capabilities either on the level of the allies themselves or on the level of the alliance, capabilities such as the NATO response force, or on the European level the battle groups.

One point that is more important here in respect to this conference is that the United States, unlike most of its Western European allies, shares the perception that NATO's enlargement is a way to contain or even roll back Russia's influence. That is not something you will hear often in public speeches, but you might hear it from officials in Washington.

To summarize, you have today two major changes in the West. You have, on one hand, the perception of NATO as an organization that still has a philosophy to extend stability and security through the Euro-Atlantic area by extension of its structures through enlargement or partnerships. On the other hand, you have a perception of NATO that it is more a competing or active actor in the security policy agenda that might also have the role to contain or even roll back competing international actors. There is some tension between the two roles, a tension also found in the discussions around Georgian enlargement. These perceptions are reinforced by the third level that I just touched on, that is the globalization of NATO's missions and capabilities. This makes this tension even more palpable.

Moscow apparently has drawn its own conclusions. You can hear very openly in Moscow today that they prefer NATO not to exist. Because that is impossible, they probably will continue with this dual track approach that I just described. A question for discussion is whether the perception they try actively to create of absolute red lines not to be crossed, in terms of the possible accession of the Ukraine or Georgia, is a real one or is a political game like the one we had in the first series of enlargements? What would it mean if this perception is real, and what does it mean if it is not?

## **PAPER: Perspectives on NATO Enlargement and its Impact on the Organization and New Members in Central and Eastern Europe.**

**Susanne Nies. Institut de Relations Internationales et Strategiques, Paris**

The debate on the role of NATO last year at the Riga summit, which is an ongoing debate, was about what role NATO should play 16 years after the end of the Cold War. This organization is still very much in crisis. That's true also for the European Union, and for the OSCE. The debate is about the mission, the political role, the global alliances, and partnerships. There are many rifts on that point. The French would like to limit NATO to a more traditional role, like the one it had before the end of the Cold War...



In 1993 for the first time a common European foreign and security policy was put in place. The common European defense policy today has had much operation since 2003, especially in Europe in the Balkan states. It's as if Europe was back after the failure we had in the early 1990s.

Since 1996 the Berlin Plus agreement ensures that military operations without participation of the US, and only using NATO materiel are possible only in the framework of humanitarian rescue, and the peace work agenda. That was a direct consequence of Dayton, of the intervention. The U.S. wanted the Europeans to be in charge of their own security. And so the idea was we'll give you some materiel, get engaged in your own situations, and don't be independent from NATO. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said there were three major risks linked to such an independent European defense that is decoupled from the US. There could be similar missions and also discrimination which means that non EU and non NATO member states could be discriminated against. I think this was a good perception if you see today the trouble we have with Turkey and Cyprus.

Now I'll discuss some basic points about enlargement. First, the impact on new members. In many ways this impact is about homogenization. The impact is not only in the military, but in the structure, organization, and commitment to Article 5. We have the new members and we have their neighbors who are nonmember states and who can give cause for tension. This is true for the Central European states. They regard themselves as the West of the East. Now they have become the East of the West, which is in many ways humiliating. I think the current clashes we have between Poland and the European Union are very much about that.

"In many ways this impact is about homogenization."

Second, the impact on the organization. The EU and NATO have always been subject to major crises after new members join because of different cultures, for instance the cultural clash between the Soviet experience and the Western European experience. There has been a debate about intelligence sharing in a small alliance versus a huge alliance. It is challenging to integrate all these new member states, all these former Soviet bloc states.

"The EU and NATO have always been subject to major crises after new members join because of different cultures..."

Membership debates are huge debates. This is also very much overlooked here in the former Soviet bloc countries. In Eastern Europe there's a romantic idea about the commitment of the United States to Eastern Europe. My expertise is in the Baltic region. After many discussions with the Americans and the decision makers of the time there was a reluctance to include the Baltic states, especially because of Russia. Many members of the Partnership for Peace in NATO, which was a bit like the European Neighborhood Policy in the EU, called it a Partnership for Postponement. This process helped these countries win time and get used to cooperation, and has been quite successful.

The 1997 Russia and Ukraine Founding Act, which was ratified in Paris with the three

first new members getting in, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic getting in, is subject to many changes... This first enlargement was lobbied by Madeleine Albright, originating from Czechoslovakia in 1997. Germany had some hesitation and was very much in favor of Hungary. France wanted Romania and Slovenia to be in the first round. Later came the discussion about the Baltic states. This was the most difficult issue because they were a part of the former Soviet Union. A pressure group was set up and very efficient lobbying was carried out, especially in Washington. The US asked the EU to take the first step. NATO accession was postponed until 2004...

Next year in Bucharest the decision will be made to take in three new member states—Albania, Croatia, Macedonia... Georgia is likely to get MAP status next year in Bucharest, and someday will come into NATO. The Ukraine discussion clearly has been dropped. The Bush administration is lobbying for Ukraine, but in Europe the idea still meets with rejection. In the case of Georgia we have some more challenging issues, such as the unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

## DISCUSSION

**Paata Zakareishvili.** What are the differences between Germany and France with regard to NATO accession? Before Sarkozy became president, it seemed that France was against Georgia's membership?

**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** In general terms, the French and the German positions on this question are similar. On the principle side it's clear. Any European country that fulfills the criteria can join NATO. It's an open door policy. It's legally and politically clear cut. But you have to fulfill the criteria.

**Arda Inal-Ipa.** If the goal of NATO is stabilization doesn't the enlargement process, or the rush to start the process provoke Russia to change its policy to militarize? What was the motivation in NATO not to accept the countries with unresolved conflicts? There are different conflicts. Our Abkhaz-Georgian conflict is not about the form of autonomy or federalization. It is a conflict over our Abkhaz desire to have our own independent country. Are there differences in approaches with regard to this kind of conflict?

**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** I see there is a certain tension between the two goals. On one hand enlargement extends the area of stability. On the other hand, it is a power political approach. I agree with you that there is a problem of timing, a problem of communication.



**Susanne Nies.** In regard to unresolved conflicts, there is no precedence in NATO for integrating such a state. The question of Georgia is very different from the other enlargements. There were many doubts about the integration of Bulgaria and Romania into the EU this year. Many urged doing this later because they did not fulfill the conditions. Then it was done for political reasons. Nevertheless I would say that MAP is important.



**Archil Gegeshidze.** What does MAP entail compared to the IPAP process (the Individual Partnership Action Plan)? Is it a continuation of the unfinished job within the IPAP or is it a qualitatively different process in terms of meeting higher standards of fulfilling whatever obligations countries have in order to join NATO? What did the Balkan states, such as Croatia or any other country like it, gain through this process? How did they improve their country in general terms? Not only in terms of transformation of their military sector, but all five sectors?

**Susanne Nies.** One important point for MAP is that the defense ministry has to be headed not by someone in the military, but by a civilian. The military should have no political role. The difference between IPAP and MAP is a promise and is like the European Neighborhood Policy for the EU. It opens the admission negotiation. So it is much more binding. It is supported. There are many meetings and exchanges. I don't think that the Croatians gained very much from that. It's not a big issue for Croatia today. What's important for Croatia is that the EU is next after NATO.

**Jonathan Cohen.** Does the process of moving from intensified dialogue to the Membership Action Plan a decision that also have a specific set of criteria?

**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** The answer is clearly no. Intensified dialogue is, if you look at the different stages of membership, partnership engagement, not a qualified stage between IPAP, which you mentioned rightly, and MAP. MAP was actually created a long time ago in the run up for the first enlargement to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. It was a very thin document, created to explain to them what it means to be a member and to take a political approach to it, and a political discussion to it. Later the instruments of partnership were developed. The intensified dialogue was actually not part of it. The document never stopped to exist. It was not taken out of circulation, but it was not applied. Intensified dialogue is not a necessary step between IPAP or MAP, or the accession process. It is a political statement. It is a political intensification of a relationship without MAP. You can actually get directly from IPAP to MAP if the process is running. The Georgian government knows that very well. Starting MAP in the eyes of some allies means a political promise to take you in. So, it's a strategic decision. That's why the intensified dialogue as a political instrument was reactivated for the case of Ukraine and Georgia.

**Liana Kvarchelia.** The main role that the newly independent states of Georgia and Ukraine would like to see NATO have in their accession is in containing Russia. Is there a way to contain Russia in a nonconfrontational way? What would make Russia happy to accept Georgia's accession to NATO? What could Russia get in exchange for agreeing to Georgia's accession into NATO?



**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** Instead of containing Russia, or pushing it back, we should engage it. We have the NATO Russia Council, a special and developed framework. There is much less in it than there could be.

**Vyacheslav Chirikba.** Does NATO plan to involve at some stage other remaining countries in this area—Azerbaijan and even Armenia?

**Susanne Nies.** There are no limits. It depends on the desire.

**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** The French position is not in agreement with this. In the Washington Treaty there is a limit. Accession is limited to European countries because partnership is limited to OSCE countries. It is not an open process. It is accepted in NATO that Georgia is a European country. Allies tend to feel less engaged the further you move away.

**Bastian Hermisson.** Mr. van Thiel, you mentioned that in France there is a perception that starting the MAP process is indirectly a promise of membership, so that's why there might be reluctance even to start the process. Because once you start there is no way back and there is no way out. Do you think that when NATO enlargement reaches a certain stage MAP might become an open ended process, and thus there might be more willingness to go ahead with the process?

**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** I cannot contradict that possibility or speculate about the future. I think that for the moment the risk is relatively limited that MAP will be transformed in such an open ended procedure.

**Walter Kaufmann.** Please elaborate more on the transformative power of NATO accession and MAP. What are the experiences with other countries with MAP? What are the experiences in Croatia? Are the reforms driven by NATO expectations? Can you talk about Croatia, Albania and other cases?

**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** The three MAP countries you mentioned are a bit complicated in this respect because they are doing the same reforms for both NATO and EU accession. The advances

are considerable in terms of democratization and the economy. I can't say for sure whether the motivation is stronger due to EU accession or NATO accession. NATO is more directly or exclusively concerned with the military defense and the democratization of the military structure. NATO is offering the instruments for transformation. The EU is offering criteria that orient governments. But the decision is taken by the partners themselves.

**Arda Inal-Ipa.** Are there some mechanisms in NATO to stop a member from engaging in unacceptable activity?

**James Mackey.** There is not a formal process for sanctioning an ally. But things in countries have happened that were unacceptable to allies and have threatened the values of the alliance. In those cases very stern messages were sent. The fact that Turkey and Greece have come close to war for 4 to 5 times in the last twenty years, but that this has been prevented is largely due to the informal negotiation and the diplomatic pressure that an organization like NATO can bring to bear. The informal ties and pressure can be quite strong.

## PANEL II. INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS WILL INFLUENCING THE DECISION ABOUT GEORGIA'S ACCESSION INTO NATO

### PAPER: The Relationships between Russia and the West as a Factor Influencing the Prospects of Georgia's NATO Accession

Andrey Ryabov, Gorbachev Foundation and Carnegie Foundation.

#### The US and Russia: will the status quo change?

... Russia regards the post Soviet region in the realm of its vital interests and therefore is wary of any global actor in the region, especially the United States, cooperating with these countries and involving them in the US sphere of influence. Since the Rose Revolution in Georgia in November 2003, and especially the Ukrainian Orange Revolution in November 2004, Moscow has suspected the US of trying to pull the post Soviet countries away from Russian influence by supporting opposition forces that would promote American style democratization. Moscow believes that the ultimate goal is to turn the political regime in Russia into a compliant pro Western government. Competing interests in the Black Sea region have created conflict. Since the beginning of the millennium the US has regarded this region as a strategic corridor that



“... Since the mid 19th century, the South Caucasus has been Russia's security frontier from the south. This means that Russia wants as neighbors friendly or at least neutral countries. If these neighbors belong to a military-political organization that Moscow regards as a potential threat it upsets Russia's entire southern security system”.

can provide energy transport routes alternative to the Persian Gulf. Expansion of the military and political presence of the US in the Black Sea region, including the plans for NATO accession of Ukraine and Georgia, cause serious concerns in Moscow which is accustomed to regarding these countries in the sphere of its vital interests. Since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the South Caucasus has been Russia's security frontier from the south. This means that Russia wants as neighbors friendly or at least neutral countries. If these neighbors belong to a military-political organization that Moscow regards as a potential threat it upsets Russia's entire southern security system.

“... It is unlikely that Russia will agree in the near future to a shift in the balance of power to the US and NATO, which would happen if Georgia joins the alliance. It is also unlikely that the US will do anything unilaterally that would elicit a sharp response from Russia, especially if it would risk destabilization in what for the US is its flank...”

In contrast to the American vision of regional security in the Black Sea involving the military and political domination of the US in the region based on the support of NATO allies, Russia wants the countries in the region to maintain security, especially the countries with the greatest military power, Russia and Turkey. It is unlikely that Russia will agree in the near future to a shift in

the balance of power to the US and NATO, which would happen if Georgia joins the alliance. It is also unlikely that the US will do anything unilaterally that would elicit a sharp response from Russia, especially if it would risk destabilization in what for the US is its flank...

**Can the European Union influence the situation?** In contrast to the United States, the European Union has economic relations with Russia. Europe gets 44% of its gas from Russia, and 67% of the coal that Russia exports. Russia's leaders no longer want the country to become part of greater Europe. Russia is proud that its good fortune in world markets enables it to be an independent center of power in the international arena. That is why Moscow will not adapt to the EU requirements for bilateral economic relations. Nor will the EU make any exceptions to its rules because of Russia's "specific conditions." Russian-European relations increasingly appear to be running into a dead end. At the same time both sides are taking steps to diversify risks because they are both very dependent on each other economically.

It is unlikely that all the countries in the European Union will have the same position on Georgia's NATO accession. Some of the largest countries, such as Germany and Italy, are wary of these plans. Others, such as Great Britain, support the idea. Moscow will most likely utilize these differences between the European countries to create additional obstacles to NATO accession. Russia will lobby the countries that are most interested in Russia's energy resources or being a transit route for these resources—Germany, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, and Hungary... Judging by how the EU has not tried to persuade the US against deploying its ABMs in Poland and the Czech Republic, it is unlikely that, if the US ultimately supports Georgia's integration into NATO and this will not risk destabilization of the situation in the Black Sea region, EU countries may not openly support accession, but they will not oppose it either.

**Challenges of the Sochi Olympics in 2014.** Because the 2014 Olympics will be held in Sochi on the Black Sea, Russia might have to lessen its confrontation with the West and demonstrate its willingness to compromise in the South Caucasus, in the areas directly adjacent to where the Olympics will take place...On the other hand, if the most active anti-Western elements in Russia's industrial military complex become significant, any Russian president will have to bend to the wishes of such a powerful coalition. Second, some Russian analysts maintain that if Russia turns its back on Abkhazia it will aggravate the situation in the western part of Russia's North Caucasus inhabited by Circassian ethnic groups related to the Abkhaz. This could destabilize the whole region and not create a good environment for the Olympics. Third, other analysts predict that if Russia does not make concessions to the US and the EU, the Olympics will take place with far fewer participants, as was the case during the summer Olympics in Moscow in 1980. In other words, because of the Sochi Olympics new factors arise that can influence relations between Russia and the US and the EU regarding Georgia's NATO accession. It is too early to know for sure exactly how these factors will impact these relations.

**By way of conclusion.** Current relations of the US and the EU with Russia have an inhibiting influence on whether Georgia becomes a member of NATO. This will continue to be the case until early 2009. After the presidential elections in the US and Russia the possibilities may change. In any case the decisive factor will be the balance of forces and influence that the US and the EU versus Russia have in the Black Sea region and neighboring regions of the Middle East and Central Asia.

**PAPER: NATO's Strategic Interests in Georgia and Prospects for Georgia's Integration**  
**James Mackey. NATO Euro-Atlantic Integration and Partnership Directorate, Brussels**

...What are NATO's strategic interests in Georgia? Why is NATO even there?

There are two main reasons. The first is hard security and the second is soft security... Clearly the western countries have an interest in energy resources and transit areas, as well as bases for military operations. There are, however, many other states in the South Caucasus and Central Asia that are much more important in this regard than Georgia. I would list Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, both of which from an energy perspective and a military geostrategic perspective are much more important than Georgia. Georgia is certainly a transit country. But it is certainly not nearly as important as Kazakhstan as an energy producer and transit country. A country does not have to be a member of NATO in order for it to be a reliable energy supplier or a reliable base for military operations. We have good cooperation with a number of countries that have no interest in becoming a NATO member. I would list Kazakhstan and Armenia, both of which have explicitly said they have no interest in being NATO members... Our cooperation with countries is not aimed at trying to bring a country into the alliance. It's aimed at the second part, which I'll talk about, which is soft security. I apologize to the political scientists because this may be a little bit different definition of soft security than is traditional in the academic sense.



What NATO has found from our ten year experience in Central and Eastern Europe is that countries that are democratic, that have a free market economy, and that follow the rule of law are safer, more stable and more able to provide for their own security. This is why NATO is involved not only in the South Caucasus, but in places like the Balkans, Central Asia and North Africa. If NATO assists these countries to become more stable and democratic then it dramatically improves NATO's security, because absent that, these countries will be the origin of or the transit point for international terrorism, trafficking in persons, narcotics and weapons of mass destruction. So it is very much in NATO's interests to be actively engaged in these countries. The key element I'd like to stress again is that what we've found is that countries that are able to provide for their security internally and develop themselves internally, democratically and through a free market

economy, can become security producers, security providers, and therefore don't represent a threat to the region around them.

“... I have yet to hear a convincing argument about why countries that are stable, democratic and financially stable represent a threat to Russia's security”.

Talking about stable democratic states, we have very honest and open discussions monthly with our colleagues from Russia in the NATO Russia Council. Often they involve shouting and pounding of fists on tables. I think it's important that we have that dialogue and are able to talk in a concrete way about the differences we have. However (I have talked to members of the Duma, I have been to Russia several times to talk with colleagues there), I have yet to hear a convincing argument about

why countries that are stable, democratic and financially stable represent a threat to Russia's security. This is a key challenge, convincing Russia that the new states of NATO, and the countries with which we are cooperating, whether the Ukraine or Moldova, how it is that making these countries more stable, more democratic, better able to provide for their people and their own security, how that is not a threat to Russia. Given the economic and political power of Russia, Russia will always be important to these regions. It's inevitable. It's physics. So if these countries are more stable, more reliable partners it seems that Russia, by geography alone, will have a good opportunity to be active and involved there in the future.

Now I will discuss Georgia's prospects for NATO integration. This relates directly to what I talked about in the first part, which is the promotion of values. NATO is involved in Georgia because the Georgian government and the Georgian people are attempting to reform, and are attempting to achieve higher standards of democratic practice. You can certainly argue about how much further the government has to go before the transition is complete, but the progress in the past several years has been dramatic across a number of fronts.

“...provided the Georgian government carries out its reforms, and makes a good faith honest effort to pursue peaceful conflict resolution, the conflicts will not act as a veto”.

NATO would be involved in Georgia regardless of whether or not it wanted to be a member. As I said, we're active in Kazakhstan and Armenia. We have IPAPs with both those countries. So, because it's in our interests, this is the main reason we're involved in Georgia. NATO allies have been very clear on this. This is an agreed alliance position, we will work with countries that are trying to reform, and want to be members, provided the standards are achieved that are necessary to become a member.

One of the standards, and this is a core value of NATO is peaceful resolution of conflicts. This is what we stress with the Georgian authorities repeatedly. Without peaceful conflict resolution there is no prospect for NATO membership. At the same time these conflicts will not block Georgia's further integration into NATO, because no third party will have a veto over Georgia's aspirations or Georgia's entry. Provided the Georgian government carries out its reforms, and makes a good faith honest effort to pursue peaceful conflict resolution, the conflicts will not act as a veto.

How will this be done in practice?... I don't have the specific details right now. Just as I can't tell you when Georgia will get MAP or when Georgia will get into NATO. But I do think that NATO has been quite inventive in thinking about creating solutions to unique problems. It's how we were able to survive over the last ten years. It led to the creation of the Partnership for Peace and the programs in North Africa. We will find a way to do this.

Regarding the conflicts, we have only one text that talks about the role of conflicts with regard to enlargement of the alliance. It is a 1995 study on NATO enlargement. To this day that study is the basis for discussion about the enlargement of the alliance. The text says that countries that have territorial conflicts or ethnic problems within their territory must work to peacefully resolve these conflicts in line with the principles of the OSCE. Such efforts will be one factor in determining membership in NATO.

Does that mean that Georgia has to have the conflicts resolved before it can come in? Our interpretation is no. How far does Georgia have to go before it moves to MAP and the next stage? That's a judgment that each of the 26 allies has to make individually. Each of them has a different standard. But I think it's clear that Georgia is on the track toward moving closer to NATO. That's why I wholeheartedly participate in this conference. It's very important that we begin discussing these issues so we can discuss them in a real concrete manner. The timeline is unknown. The destination is clear. I sincerely hope and believe that this NATO integration process is one that's going to benefit all people in the region.

## **PAPER: NATO and Georgia: Prospects for Conflict Transformation**

**Bruno Coppieters. Professor of Political Science. Free University. Brussels.**

...When the Dayton peace agreement was implemented in 1995 to end the Bosnian war, there was a broad discussion already in Georgia on the role of military force in secessionist conflicts and the potential role of NATO in Georgia. The Georgian President Shevardnadze asked NATO to implement the Bosnia model also in Abkhazia, arguing that ethnic cleansing had taken place in Abkhazia as it had in Bosnia. If military intervention had been necessary in Bosnia, it would also be necessary in Abkhazia. Shevardnadze defended the same position in 1999 when NATO went to war against Serbia. He likewise stated that the Georgian population from Abkhazia had suffered a similar fate as the Albanian Kosovars, and would thus need the same type of protection and humanitarian intervention by the international community. In this case, the application of the 'Kosovo model' to Abkhazia would mean that NATO would likewise have to use military force.

In some of his interviews, Shevardnadze was relatively prudent, and said that there was a difference between the Kosovo model and its application to Abkhazia in the sense that the West



was not able to overrule Russia in the Security Council in the case of Abkhazia. So Russia would have needed to agree with a Western military involvement. But other Georgian officials pointed out that NATO's decision to go to war against Serbia without Russia's agreement was a positive one. It had to be supported and would have to be remembered in deciding about the use of force in the Abkhaz question. So there was the general expectation that NATO could do something about Abkhazia, and certainly with military means. Breaking the deadlocked negotiations was the main issue here.

Now about NATO's expectations... What is common among the expectations of NATO countries is that they seem to believe that the integration of Georgia into NATO would have positive effects on the resolution of its national conflicts. Are those expectations accurate? Is the Georgian expectation that NATO is willing and able to be supportive in breaking the deadlock in the Abkhaz-Georgian negotiations realistic? Is NATO's expectation that further integration of Georgia into NATO will be helpful resolve the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, or the Russian-Georgian conflict accurate? ...

Two different types of national conflicts are involved in the question of Abkhazia. One is an intrastate conflict, a Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, and it is an intrastate conflict even if Abkhazia is a de facto state, and the other conflict is an interstate conflict, between Russia and Georgia. When we are speaking about the various expectations put into Georgia's integration within NATO, we have to keep this distinction in mind...

I will argue that the impact of Georgia's NATO integration on the Georgian-Russian and the Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts can be positive in respect to certain objectives but not necessarily in respect to all objectives. These various objectives have also to be realized in different time spans. Conflict transformation is something that necessarily requires a long time. Conflict prevention, in contrast, can be implemented in a shorter time period...

We want to see positive conflict transformation, the transformation of the incompatible positions of the parties into compatible ones so that the parties can work together... If we speak about the positive effects of Georgia's membership in NATO we have to analyze all the consequences of these different forms of conflict resolution. My thesis is that the common membership of two actors who have a conflict with each other in an international security organization may have a positive effect on conflict prevention, conflict transformation, and conflict settlement, and thus on conflict resolution generally. But the situation is very different in an inter-state conflict or in an intra-state conflict if only one of those actors accedes to that international organization, and the other one remains outside of it. These types of situations have to be analyzed separately.

We have many examples within the European Union, the OSCE and NATO, of two sovereign states having national conflicts, conflicts over national identity and interests with each other, which are integrated into these organizations and where we can see a positive effect on conflict prevention, conflict transformation and conflict settlement. Germany and Poland achieved within the CSCE/OSCE some successes during the Cold War concerning their boundaries and the

question of territorial integrity. This progress was intensified with the Polish accession process to the EU. Even if there have been strong political tensions between Poland and Germany after 2004, much progress has been made in recent years compared to the situation before 2004. The same is true about Germany and the Czech Republic. It doesn't mean that all the political problems are resolved between these countries, but there is clear progress and surely in respect about the fundamental issues concerning their national identity. The same can be said about Ireland and the United Kingdom. The progress in the Northern Ireland question and more particularly the Belfast Agreement are largely the result of the cooperation between Ireland and the United Kingdom within the European Union after their common accession in 1973. Greece and Turkey have likewise made serious progress toward conflict resolution. We see in this case a positive conflict transformation in which a common membership in NATO and the prospects of a common membership in the EU, with Greek support for Turkish membership to the EU, plays an important role...

In the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict we're talking about an intrastate conflict. Here the lessons are still different. Cyprus is the closest example, although you aren't dealing in this case with the effects of integration of its recognized government into NATO, but into the European Union. Contrary to most other national conflicts in Europe, you have the problem of a de facto state in Northern Cyprus, which means that there is a state authority having effective control on a part of the Cypriot territory and its population. That part of the Cypriot territory is formally part of the EU, its citizens are formally EU-citizens but it is outside the control of the recognized government of Cyprus and of all EU institutions. A similar situation would emerge if Georgia would become a NATO-member: Abkhazia and South Ossetia would be formally part of NATO territory, but outside the effective control of NATO-member Georgia...

In Northern Cyprus there was a positive form of conflict transformation for the Turkish Cypriot community and in Southern Cyprus a negative form of conflict transformation for the Greek Cypriot community. After the failure of the Annan plan, due to Greek Cypriot opposition, the European Union is clearly stating that they are not neutral in the conflict, because Cyprus is now a member of the European Union. The EU has limited capacities to intervene in that conflict and to be helpful for its resolution. Its capacity as a mediator or a facilitator would have been far higher if Cyprus would not be a member of the European Union. The Greek Cypriots would probably have accepted the Annan Plan in the 2004 referendum if this had been the condition for membership.

So how to explain all those differences between the positive impact of common accession of parties in conflict to an international security organization and the negative impact in case only one of the parties becomes a member of such an organization? Much has probably to do with the question if membership increases or decreases the equality between the actors. This would be the first explanation for the diverging consequences of membership on conflict transformation. There is positive conflict transformation if there is common NATO membership which gives both parties in conflict the opportunity to participate on an equal level in the international

security organization, and there is negative transformation if only one of the parties becomes a member.

A second explanation for the diverging potential impact of membership of international security organizations on the transformation of national conflicts has to be sought in the functioning of a multilateral framework, concerning the type of communication between the actors. It is difficult to come to positive forms of conflict transformation if negotiations only happen on a bilateral level. In a multilateral framework, communication has far more positive consequences for conflict transformation. If the Germans and the French would have had to resolve their differences exclusively on the bilateral level they would not have come to the same positive results as they have reached now through their common membership in Western institutions, and first of all, the European Union. It is within the European Union that the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom managed to come closer to each other.

Third, when actors with a national conflict accede together to an international security organization they increase the number of common rules they have to follow. This also facilitates positive conflict transformation.

Among those three explanations, the question of equality is probably the most crucial. If two actors in conflict with each other become a member of the same organization, their common membership and common sovereign equality will lead to a greater mutual respect of their equality. The element of equality is quite important in interaction in a multilateral framework and common membership in a rule based organization such as NATO. In contrast, if one of the actors remains outside of the multilateral framework their inequality increases. In that case they have to try to resolve their differences in a bilateral framework.

In the case of the Turkish-Greek national conflict, both actors are members of NATO and Greece supports Turkish accession to the EU. Such an accession will give further support to the resolution of their conflicts. This common accession will increase their equality, their communication and the number of rules they have to follow in common. But if Georgia gets access to NATO membership, the sovereign equality, the mutual communication and the number of rules Georgia and Russia would have to follow in common will not increase.

In case of the intra-state conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia, there is already a severe inequality according to the membership and participation requirements to international security organizations. Sovereignty is traditionally a basic condition for membership but also for participation in international security organizations. The sole exception as far as participation is concerned is the European Union. In the Council of Ministers of the EU, federated states and regions have a limited form of participation. Georgian membership to NATO would not give any possibility to Abkhazia to participate in this organization. It would thus increase the inequality between Georgia and Abkhazia, make their communication more difficult and furthermore not lead to the creation of common rules they have to obey.

Concerning Cyprus, the Annan Plan had found a solution to the question of equality, communication and the implementation of common rules for non-sovereign actors. If the Annan

plan would have been accepted, the European Union would have given equal standing to the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. The Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot representatives within the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers) would not represent their community but the state of Cyprus as a whole. This would have been a form of equality. It made the European Union highly attractive to the Turkish Cypriots. But such a solution cannot be found at present within the NATO framework. NATO does not give any form of expression to non-sovereign actors. In that sense, NATO is a far more rigid organization than the European Union.

James Mackey said in his presentation that democratic states become security providers. This is true to some extent on an international scale, but this statement should also be relativized. The United States has not provided security to Iraq, despite the fact that the decision on Iraq was very democratically taken. Three-fourths of the American population favored the war, and Congress was in favor too. It would have been difficult to get more democratic support for that decision. The statement that democratic states are security providers is even more difficult to confirm in internal conflicts. In such a case, there is no limitation as far as legal rules are concerned to the right of central governments to intervene forcefully... Concerning the Georgian-Russian conflict, Georgian membership in NATO will create new types of inequality. For the moment, Russia is the stronger actor in that conflict. Georgia's NATO membership would create another type of inequality. Georgia is a very small state compared to Russia but it will try as part of a greater alliance to turn its own conflict with Russia into a NATO-Russia conflict. The Georgian disputes with Russia will be put automatically on the agenda of the discussions between NATO and Russia. It will still not be a real multilateral interaction. It will have to happen in a bilateral NATO-Russia framework.

NATO may also be able to improve conflict prevention between Georgia and Russia. This may be done in the same way as conflict prevention has been improved due to Russian support to Abkhazia in its conflict with Georgia. Abkhazia has received Russian support, which turned the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict into a Georgian-Russian conflict. This has improved conflict prevention, but has worsened conflict transformation and prospects for conflict settlement. That has been described as a preservation of the status quo and as a freezing of the negotiations. Something similar may happen by including the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and the Georgian-Russian conflict into the NATO-Russia relationship.

It may thus be concluded that nothing dramatic will follow from Georgia's accession to NATO. I would expect that such a membership would affect the NATO-Russia relationship, help to prevent the emergence of violent conflicts between Russia and Georgia and between Abkhazia and Georgia, but increase the differences between the conflicting parties in respect to their national identities and interests. I do not see how Georgia's membership in NATO would offer something positive in respect to conflict transformation or conflict settlement.

The result will probably not be dramatic. Belgium will not die for Georgia and Russia will not die for Abkhazia. What I would thus expect is that the Georgian-Abkhaz and the Georgian-Russian national conflicts will be further frozen. We may then conclude that the Georgians will not

realize the objective they associate with NATO accession, namely the expectation that integration into NATO may break the deadlock in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. NATO's expectation that Georgia's integration into NATO may improve the resolution of its national conflicts should also be considered as highly optimistic but not as realistic.

## DISCUSSION



**Ibragim Chkadua.** What will NATO do if Russian peacekeepers are on Georgia's territory, a NATO candidate?

**James Mackey.** These real issues about how NATO will respond to this situation when Georgia has Article 5 is something we won't have to deal with for some time to come... An undemocratic Georgia not in NATO is more likely to cause conflict with Abkhazia than a democratic and stable Georgia in NATO. In the next several years we're going to see quite a development in the NATO Russia relationship. There is discussion now of a possible NATO Russia peacekeeping force for Transdniestria. There is a long way to go before we need to begin thinking about concrete, specific questions of that nature.

**Andrey Ryabov.** What about the 30 kilometer border area in Sochi that Russian and foreign citizens will have very limited access to during the Olympics if a NATO country is on that border? What about the Sochi airport and high volume of planes?



**Magdalena Frichova.** What about Georgia's chances for NATO accession if it develops into a very strong Georgia with strong institutions and very good foreign investment, but very authoritarian or not sufficiently democratic?

**James Mackey.** I don't believe that an authoritarian Georgia could be strong and economically strong as well. Georgia is too small. It does not sit on top of oil resources. The Georgian

state knows that if it starts a conflict in Abkhazia where's the tipping point for the Georgian government? Right now foreign direct investment is dwarfing foreign assistance. It's much larger than the millennium challenge account. It's much larger than anything the European Union is giving. So, what are the conditions under which that investment would flee? One of those is if Georgia provokes a conflict. Quite clearly many foreign investors have already told the Georgian government this—we're coming but only if you maintain peaceful conflict resolution. So there is a tipping point.

**Magdalena Frichova.** From observing developments in Russia in the media one has the sense that the concept of insult is strong when referring to the West's relationship to Russia. How do you view the debates on possible accession of Georgia to NATO?

**Andrey Ryabov.** Of course we should take into account attitudes shaped by the rise in Russian patriotism. Because of these widespread attitudes in public opinion and in the centers of decision making most representatives of the ruling elite do not think that Georgian accession to NATO will happen in the near future. This may be a prospect up the line, but not in the next 2-3 years. Therefore, if it is not on the table now we can forget about it at the moment. My question about Sochi is also related to this issue, because the ruling elites aren't thinking about it.

**Alexandros Yannis.** Where is Russia driving on Kosovo? If Kosovo will get independence and Russia won't agree, what will be the impact on Abkhazia and what will be the Russian response to this?

**Andrey Ryabov.** I do not think that the Russian government has any ability, any interest to work out its own plan around Kosovo. The key position is – let's give the Serbs and Albanians opportunities to reach a compromise without any other participation. Take into account the position of the government in Belgrade, the Serbs. If, for instance, after the probable Russian veto in the UN Security Council, if the US and EU after that officially recognize the independence of Kosovo without any concession to Russia regarding the post Soviet countries, or maybe some promises to Russia, I think that the chances for Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be officially recognized will be 50/50.

**Paula Garb.** How are you defining strong democracy? What are the indicators of a strong democracy and where do you place Georgia in those respect? Do you think that Georgia is on its way to a strong democracy? Do you think that Georgia is a democratizing country, or has it already achieved democracy?

**James Mackey.** I think it's very difficult to say that there is a full democracy, except for Switzerland, anywhere in the world. All countries are developing democracies. It's a matter of where they are on the spectrum. Georgia is a developing democracy right now. Georgia holds elections that are

relatively free and fair. Does Georgia have problems with its elections? Yes. I can't even say that all the countries in NATO are free of all these problems yet. Does Georgia have a long way to go? Yes. So Georgia is democratizing.

**Paula Garb.** Political science research shows that democratizing countries are not very stable, are volatile. In such cases how does NATO help make that transitional period less volatile?

**James Mackey.** Democracy is a messy system, but it's the best one we've been able to come up with so far. So there are going to be bumps on the road, problems we will face. There are problems that we face today. We have very, very hard discussions. NATO doesn't have a role to play in conflict resolution. It's not in NATO's skill set. The OSCE and the UN are the two main actors in conflict resolution and negotiations. The supporting role that NATO will play is to help the Georgian government develop because we believe that a more democratic government will be a better interlocutor, will be more likely to pursue peaceful conflict resolution.

**Bruno Coppieters.** What has NATO and Georgia's progressive integration into NATO achieved so far in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict? Without having Georgia as a member of NATO it has had a big impact. It has had a positive impact on democratizing Georgia, on moderating certain views of Georgia, but on the other side it was also used in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict as a potential threat to strengthen the Georgian argument that force could be used as a last resort. I think that this has had a negative effect on resolving the conflict.

**Walter Kaufmann.** James, you say that the message is clear--no peaceful conflict resolution, no membership in NATO. On the ground I can't see any peaceful conflict resolution at the moment in Georgia, at least in the Abkhaz direction. There's no policy at all. So there's no resort to violence, but what is the criteria for peaceful resolution, or at least a process?

**Inal Khashig.** Has there been any consultation with the Abkhaz on NATO accession of Georgia? As far as I know the Abkhaz side doesn't know anything concretely about how this accession

"...whether Georgia is hungry or full it will still want Abkhazia. It will always take the position that "if the conflict can't be resolved peacefully, then we'll resolve it militarily."

will look. I've heard here that NATO doesn't resolve conflicts, but I've also heard that NATO will guarantee peaceful resolution of the conflict. NATO can also cause conflicts, although no one has said anything about that. We would like to know NATO's position toward Georgia during this transitional period, and also what NATO's policies would be toward Abkhazia after Georgia's accession. What kind of guidelines will there be, and what will happen if Georgia doesn't follow the guidelines. There are many

questions we'd like answers to, but we don't hear even approximate answers. We hear that a rich and stable Georgia will have less temptation to start a conflict. I think that whether Georgia is

hungry or full it will still want Abkhazia. It will always take the position that “if the conflict can’t be resolved peacefully, then we’ll resolve it militarily.”

**James Mackey.** I apologize if you feel that I haven’t answered your questions. I feel I’ve answered quite a few of them. If they were not satisfactory answers then I apologize. The failing is on my part to not have provided a convincing enough argument. I’m completely honest with you. You asked what we talk to the Georgian government about on conflict resolution. I told you what we tell the Georgian government. We say peaceful conflict resolution is a core value of NATO. We’ve told the Georgians that if they think that NATO is going to solve the conflicts for them they are sorely mistaken. We work with the Georgian government to help them reform because we believe that a reformed Georgian government is safer for NATO. When we talk about the conflicts we say peaceful conflict resolution is a core value, NATO support for Georgia is based on Georgia’s adherence to peaceful conflict resolution. If that is not satisfactory I apologize. I’ve been in every meeting between President Saakashvili and the Secretary General of NATO. I get many of the other reports. That’s all that has been discussed.

**Archil Gegeshidze.** NATO is the major, if not the single force at this point in Georgia that is really restraining the party of war, the hotheads in Georgia who might be willing to encourage the government to resort to the use of force. Mr. Mackey, regarding the process remaining from now until the next summit, what will this process look like, what kind of stages will we go through?

**James Mackey.** Regarding the process going forward, we’re still in intensified dialogue, which means we have discussions with the Georgian government in very concrete terms about what the standards are for membership. We don’t speak in specifics about Georgia’s standards, but about standards that apply to any country that wants to become a member of NATO. We had an assessment this spring of Georgia’s progress on IPAP. The full report is classified, but the main findings of the report are not going to surprise to anyone. There were still some concerns about the independence of the judiciary and improvements in the rule of law. The defense side showed pretty good reforms, but the strategic defense review is coming out, which is public and will lay out the reforms for the next 10 years. We need to see implementation of that. I think that many people will be surprised about how small the Georgian army is going to be in 15 years if the government follows the plan. It will be far and away the smallest military in the Caucasus region, much smaller than in Armenia or Azerbaijan by a lot. Strong progress is needed in other areas, such as democratic building prior to the 2008 elections, professionalization of the Central Election Commission, the need to update the voters’ lists, ensure that the media are not supporting only government candidates. We will need to see in the coming months prior to the next summit some strong effort in all the areas I just outlined.

**Liana Kvarchelia.** If Abkhazia doesn’t agree to Georgia’s territorial integrity what leverage will NATO use?

**James Mackey.** This is not in NATO's competence to determine borders. It is up to the United Nations to determine the international boundaries of countries. NATO will only act in accordance with United Nations principles on this issue.

**Magdalena Frichova.** I want to elaborate on Liana's comments. I think that we have actually touched on the central themes of confidence or the lack thereof, and perceptions. So, back to what I think was the initial part of this conversation when Jan Hendrick van Thiel said that the alliance means well and, of course, "we're not going to be instrumentalized, and we do mean conflict resolution in a peaceful way." I totally agree and understand that is NATO's position. However, I am not convinced that the Abkhaz and Ossetians have the necessary level of trust in this message, or for that matter in other Western organizations that deliver similar messages. The populations in the conflict regions do not seem convinced that there is a willingness to hear their fears and aspirations given the status paradigm from which international organizations are operating.

**James Mackey.** I agree that in the context of a lack of trust between the sides any message can be distorted. Unfortunately that's happening. I hope the Georgian government has become more sensitive, especially after the departure of one particular individual last fall, and that the situation has become a little bit better. But at the end of the day, speaking as a military person now from NATO, even if we're talking in straight military terms, a war in Abkhazia would be disastrous for Georgia. The Georgians know this and the Abkhaz know this. I sincerely hope that there are people of good minds on both sides who are working desperately to prevent that from happening again. It doesn't matter how many reservists you have, Georgia does not have the capabilities.

**Magdalena Frichova.** Yes, but obviously this context is very complex. On one hand you say there is no offensive capability because Georgia is at the moment only building defensive capabilities, and trying to strive for interoperability with NATO. At the same time there is very little transparency with regard to the military budget. What kind of message does that give to the conflict regions? Obviously, it's very strong. Obviously you have a good point. At the same time it's not the entire picture.

**James Mackey.** Certainly the military transparency, the military budget is something we've pushed the Georgian government on very hard. Currently the military budget is eight line items. We are hoping for the 2008 budget that will be up to at least 70 or 80 lines if not more in conjunction with the Strategic Defense Review, because this will really increase transparency, not just for the Abkhaz and the Ossetians, but for the Georgian public too. Civil society needs to see what's happening, needs to be able to challenge the government on some of the decisions that they're taking. That's a constant thing we're pushing. It's tough in post-Soviet areas. The default is to keep things hidden. It's more cultural than a lack of will.

**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** You have to understand what NATO cannot do. NATO was perceived as being part of a possible military solution. We said that is absolutely out of the question. Now we are shifting to a discussion about whether NATO can guarantee of the status quo. That is completely out of the question. You have to understand that as well. NATO will not recognize a de facto regime. NATO will not guarantee a de facto regime. James made it very clear that NATO recognizes international law and that the boundaries of the state as defined by the UN are binding. There is no credible scenario in which NATO could be part of a violent solution. There are three things NATO can do. First, it can and will continue to preach restraint to all sides. It will use its informal means to pressure the government to refrain from violence. It will actively support any peaceful resolution conducted by these organizations that are competent in this conflict—the OSCE and the United Nations.

**Paata Zakareishvili.** I'm concerned that there is no dialogue across the conflict. Georgia dictates its conditions to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and doesn't try to build consensus. The conflict regions are not prepared to joyfully embrace what might look good to international organizations. To what extent are international organizations willing to take these opinions into account? South Ossetia and Abkhazia can't be heard in Brussels and Strassbourg. What information do you have about the conflict regions that does not come from the Georgian government?

**James Mackey.** I take your point that you cannot have a solution without hearing the real interests of the Abkhaz people. We are trying to bring several groups of Abkhaz citizens to NATO headquarters. I'm working with the United States Embassy to find some people to come. We will not allow the Georgian government to veto this issue, because it's not right. We are doing the same with regard to South Ossetia. NATO will do what it can to support both sides in finding a peaceful resolution. But NATO will not play a role in the resolution of these conflicts. I know that's not a satisfactory answer to many people.

**Andrey Ryabov.** My short remark provides additional arguments that Russian officials give for why they want to protect the status quo in this area so strongly. In terms of the prospects of Georgian NATO accession the Kremlin would like to support positive contacts with all South Caucasus states—Armenia and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan as a strategic partner is very important due to its location on transport corridors, and due to many, many other issues. Armenia is a military ally in this area despite what official documents may say. As for Georgia, of course, it is better to have more neutral relations with this country. But if, for instance, Georgia comes out of this space and joins another political entity or international association, or alliance, it means that the whole building of Russian security is being undermined, a building that has existed here for a century or more. How to compensate for the loss of this huge keystone, which is going away from the foundation of this national security issue? Some compensation should be offered to make up for this loss to ensure Russia's security.

Another matter is also very important, something that is not being discussed in international issues—the issue of ethnic stability in the Russian North Caucasus. The Ossetian problem has really divided people. Nobody really knows how this will be resolved. Of course this is a domestic issue, but if it affects other issues as well, it also has an international dimension. It is not purely a Russian domestic issue. The same goes for the Abkhaz issue because it affects the five or six autonomous areas of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus—the Circassians, and the heart of the Sochi resort (the Shapsug autonomous area), etc. This question also has to be on the table for discussion. When these questions are not being discussed Russian officials suspect that others would like to solve their own problems while ignoring Russian interests. This also offends us. So they think why should we take into account their interests, their plans, their strategy? We say that if they want to be selfish we can be selfish too. This is important to discuss for very practical reasons.

### PANEL III. EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION OF GEORGIA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE GEORGIAN-ABKHAZ CONFLICT

#### PAPER: Abkhazia, Georgia, Russia, and NATO

Vyacheslav Chirikba. Abkhaz Institute for Humanitarian Research. Sukhum/i

In this era of globalization and the division of the post Soviet world and strategic realignment of the members of old political alliances, the West, and especially the US, is making every effort to gain new geopolitical space among the former Soviet republics. Russia, which used to be in sole control of the region, is trying with varying degrees of success to maintain good relations with the West while resisting its efforts to integrate into NATO countries such as Ukraine and Russia. Russia regards NATO as a military-



political alliance that is an instrument of US global policy. It fears the creation around its borders of unfriendly countries oriented toward the US whose policies would upset the military-political balance and pose significant challenges to Russia's security, which is especially probable if a Democrat wins the US presidential election.

Of the post Soviet countries only Georgia's determination to join NATO is unflinching. Judging by Russia's extremely negative reaction, Georgia is likely to become an important factor in tensions between the US and Russia. What may be the consequences of Georgia's NATO accession in terms of the unresolved Georgian-Abkhaz conflict and the interests of the main players—Georgia, Abkhazia and Russia? I'll begin with Georgia and the three most important reasons why it wants to join NATO.

First, Georgia undoubtedly regards NATO as the main instrument to restore full control over the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as evidenced by frequent statements about that by Georgia's leaders. Since Georgia cannot coax Abkhazia back into Georgia with words, it is clear that Georgia intends to accomplish this task militarily with the help of NATO resources. Second, Georgia wants to end all political and military influence of Russia. Third, Georgia counts on significant financial dividends from NATO membership.

How realistic is it for Georgia to expect help from NATO to restore its control over the two republics lost in military action, or in other words, restore its territorial integrity? Under international law, secession or the breakup of a country is the internal affair of that country. As a military-political organization NATO will come to Georgia's aid only in case of an external threat. NATO membership of Great Britain and Canada does not impact in any way their internal domestic processes, even if Scotland or Quebec seceded. By the same token NATO cannot hinder the

breakup of Belgium into two countries along the ethnic lines of Wallonia and Flandria. Therefore Georgia's dream of relying on NATO's military aid to restore its territorial integrity and to force Abkhazia and South Ossetia back under its political control is cause for sufficient skepticism.

In the absence of an external military threat to Georgia, NATO members can only assist a negotiation process; they cannot resolve the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict in Georgia's favor by military means. An important factor that also makes a NATO military operation on Georgia's side against Abkhazia unlikely is the fact that Abkhazia has a small but strong and highly motivated military. Furthermore, such military action would inevitably bring into the conflict Abkhazia's allies among the North Caucasus ethnic groups. Therefore it is naïve to think that NATO would conduct such military operations in Abkhazia that could lead to a long-term conflict involving a large part of the North Caucasus.

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The Russian factor also makes a NATO military campaign in Abkhazia out of the question. The majority of Abkhazia's people are Russian citizens. Thus, Russia would be compelled to intervene militarily in such a conflict. The nearly apocalyptic nature of the consequences to world security of such developments, completely rules out the possibility that NATO countries would engage in open military confrontation with Russia for the sake of Georgia's territorial ambitions.

If the prospect of Georgia's entry into NATO raises high hopes in Georgia, in Abkhazia it conjures up fears. Abkhazia is neutral toward NATO outside of the Georgian context. As the prospect of Georgia's NATO accession comes closer, the fears in Abkhazia increase. Georgia as a NATO member is regarded in Abkhazia as a much more dangerous opponent, and thus is relevant to Abkhazia's security. The concrete factors that are seen

in Abkhazia as a threat if Georgia joins NATO are the following three:

(1) NATO significantly improves Georgia's military capacity which could lead to Georgia using NATO's political and military might to militarily reintegrate Abkhazia into Georgia.

(2) Georgia's entry into NATO before a political settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict would undoubtedly complicate or postpone for a long time Abkhazia's international recognition, which is Abkhazia's foreign policy goal.

(3) Georgia's NATO membership would help remove Russia completely from the South Caucasus and leave Abkhazia without any friendly country in the region, and significantly weaken Abkhazia militarily, politically, and economically.

The most vulnerable areas for Abkhazia from a military perspective are in the Upper Kodori, and Gal region. Abkhazia made a serious strategic error when it did not occupy the Upper Kodori following its military victory in 1993, and did not deploy its forces there, or even set up posts for CIS peacekeepers and UN observers. In light of Georgia's recent military-political actions in Upper

Kodor, Abkhazia has to reconcile itself to the predictable results of this situation. In the Gal region Abkhazia repatriated large numbers of Megrelian refugees unilaterally, against the policy of the UN and Georgia, against the interests of its own security, and without any acknowledgement of the international community. This repatriation has created the danger that Georgia could use this population against Abkhazia in a new war. Abkhazia cannot rule out attempts to take away these two regions. Georgia's membership in NATO could make these plans a reality.

In this context Abkhazia insists on settlement of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict before Georgia joins NATO. Abkhaz politicians, such as foreign affairs minister, Sergei Shamba, stress that although Georgia is a sovereign state with the right to resolve its problems with or without participation of military-political blocs, and although Abkhazia regards itself as independent of Georgia, these two countries are still connected to each other by this unresolved conflict. Therefore Abkhazia is concerned about significant increases in Georgia's military power as a NATO member. Even if Georgia does not have any plans for resolving the conflict militarily, there is always the possibility of a provocation that could escalate into a military conflict...

Is the West prepared to bring a country into NATO with unresolved and essentially unresolvable territorial and political problems? Opposition to this has been expressed in France, the Netherlands, and Germany. Recent statements of NATO officials, however, indicate that Georgia's unresolved conflicts are not an obstacle to NATO membership. This is a big change from the organization's original position not to accept countries with territorial disputes. Divided Cyprus is often presented as the basis for this change because Greek Cyprus was admitted into the EU.

The question is, will the US persuade its West European partners to admit Georgia into NATO even though the country does not control and cannot control without external military assistance a significant part of its territory that it wants back—Abkhazia and South Ossetia—despite the potential for destabilization, escalation of the conflict and confrontation with Russia? If the US cannot persuade the allies, Georgia will not join NATO in the near future and the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict will remain frozen indefinitely.

Georgia could, of course, try to get back Abkhazia and South Ossetia militarily before NATO accession. That is unlikely, however, because Georgia's western friends oppose a military solution to the conflicts, because Russia would definitely energetically oppose this, and because of the fighting potential of the South Ossetian and especially Abkhaz armed forces.

The third scenario might be that Russia would prevent Georgia from NATO accession together with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and to substitute for the loss of Georgia recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia would keep these countries in the sphere of its influence and for a long time

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to come would have some political and military presence in the South Caucasus.

If it becomes clear that Georgia's NATO accession is inevitable, the only way for Russia to stop this would be to recognize Abkhazia and prevent the use of Abkhazia to deploy NATO forces near Russia's border. For this purpose Russia can use the Kosovo case to support its actions. The Russian president and influential former minister of defense have already made that clear. Georgian NATO accession could provoke Russia to create its own sanitary cordon around NATO Georgia in Abkhazia and possible South Ossetia. The unilateral recognition of Kosovo's independence by the West without the UN Security Council will give Russia the legal instrument to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia. If Russia does not recognize Abkhazia before NATO integrates Georgia it will undoubtedly be removed completely from the South Caucasus which is so strategically important for Russia.

Such confrontational developments are not in the interests of either Russia or the West. That is why they will most likely enter into intensive negotiations in order to minimize the confrontation. In that case it is possible that the West would let Russia recognize Abkhazia parallel to the recognition of Kosovo by the West under the condition that Russia not incorporate Abkhazia. This would make Abkhazia a neutral buffer between NATO Georgia and Russia.

The US, the most important country in NATO, which has chosen Georgia as its main military-political base in the Caucasus, would find this division of spheres of influence acceptable. The US does not need Abkhazia at all, so this could be a bargaining chip between the US and Russia. The only obstacle to this kind of settlement would be Georgia, which has made the return of its lost territories the cornerstone of its policies. It is hard to say whether Russia and the US would agree to such a deal, and whether they could overcome Georgia's resistance to such a geopolitical settlement.

Similar problems arose between Abkhazia and Georgia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century after the fall of the Russian Empire. In 1918, a prominent British politician, Lord Kerzon, developed a plan for Abkhazia as an independent and neutral buffer between Russia, Georgia and Turkey. Today such a scenario would help create a stable peace in the western South Caucasus. The alternative is frozen conflicts and no prospects for stable development of the entire region. This does not benefit either the great powers or the people of the South Caucasus who have become hostages of the situation that has been created around them.



**PAPER: Georgia: The Way to NATO and the Conflict in Abkhazia  
Shalva Pichkadze. NGO Georgia for NATO. Tbilisi.**

...Let's consider that the issue of integration of Georgia does not appear in the context of "yes or no" but in the context of "when" and let's look at various versions of influence of this process on the conflict settlement... What will happen if by the time Georgia can join NATO we will not be able to settle the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict? Immediately another question

follows: what do we Georgians mean when we talk about “conflict settlement”:

- A flag with five stars flying over Sukhumi?
- An agreement on the political status of Abkhazia?
- Return of the refugees/IDPs?
- A referendum with the participation of the refugees/IDPs?
- A final agreement between Tbilisi and Sukhumi?
- A combination of all these decisions or some of them?

Even though the aim of our current discussion is not to answer all these questions, we believe that they do require answers.

Thus, according to NATO skeptics the unresolved conflicts will prevent Georgia from admission for the following reasons:

1. Since the end of the Cold War the alliance has not admitted any new members with similar conflicts. Neither Brussels nor the capitals of influential NATO member states have any experience dealing with such situations.
2. In 1995 NATO worked out a document called “The Study on NATO Enlargement.” It says that “states involved in ethnic disputes or external territorial disputes, including irredentist claims, or internal jurisdictional disputes, must settle those disputes by peaceful means in accordance with OSCE principles before they can become members.”
3. NATO will not grant membership to a state, part of which is essentially controlled by a non-NATO member state--Russia, although the extent of Russia’s control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia differs.
4. Georgia will face a choice between NATO accession or territorial integrity.

The optimists have their own arguments:

1. The West’s new challenges and shift of interest toward the Caspian region and Central Asia dictate that the alliance needs an ally in the region, and Georgia, even with its conflicts, will suffice for this role.
2. When the time comes to join NATO the West will be much more active in the process of settling the conflict and will make up for the negative role of Russia.
3. By that time Georgia will become a much more attractive state for the conflicting regions.
4. In all documents wherever Georgia is mentioned NATO emphasizes its respect for territorial integrity and the sovereignty of Georgia within internationally recognized borders.
5. The Secretary General of NATO stated that the conflicts will not be an obstacle for Georgia’s integration into the alliance. The statement in Georgia was interpreted as NATO’s intention not to turn Georgia into a hostage of unresolved territorial disputes and of those forces which might take advantage of using them in order to impede NATO enlargement.
6. Representatives of NATO and NATO member countries have stated more than once that if Georgia demonstrates a firm and irreversible adherence towards a peaceful resolution of the conflicts and takes reasonable measures in this direction, no matter which political

force is in power in Tbilisi, then non-settlement of the conflict would not be an obstacle to the integration.

I will examine separately one of the above listed pessimistic scenarios, namely, Georgia facing the choice between NATO membership without control over all its territories or control of all its territories but without NATO membership. Some pro-NATO politicians and experts say that in the face of such a choice it is better to join NATO, then the EU, and forget about Abkhazia and South Ossetia for awhile. If Georgia is integrated in these structures it has a greater chance of getting them back in the future.

Another alternative is to surrender unconditionally to Russia again, which most probably would formally guarantee the territorial integrity of Georgia. Thus, Russia would become Georgia's only guarantor with all the inevitable consequences. However, I don't think it's likely that Georgia will face such a difficult choice. Russia regards Georgia's possible membership in NATO as an extremely unfriendly step on the part of the alliance. It has stated more than once that in this case it would take quite severe retaliatory measures (i.e., withdrawal from the CFE, reinforcement of its military presence closer to the line adjoining NATO). For such retaliatory actions Russia would also use Abkhazia and South Ossetia which would be under Russia's control. According to such a scenario, the remaining part of Georgia, to a great extent, would lose its importance to NATO. Consequently, if Brussels decides in favor of Georgian accession to NATO it would only makes sense if Georgia is unified.

Be that as it may, the prospect of Georgia's accession into NATO brings an absolutely new dimension to the settlement process. Thus, if Georgia starts to implement the Membership Action Plan (MAP) the result will be that:

- the West will try to convince Tbilisi to make some compromises to suit Abkhazia in order to reach a settlement;
- The West will try to convince Sukhumi to remain within the framework of reasonable demands;
- The West will make the utmost efforts to make both sides refrain from hostilities, promising them the prospect of European integration.

If events develop in this way, Tbilisi might be forced to give up one of its key demands, the return of the refugees/IDPs in the foreseeable future because their mass return is the worst of all possible scenarios for the Abkhaz - the so-called the last bastion of defence.

If Georgia becomes a NATO member without resolution of the conflicts then:

- The influence of Russia in the conflict regions will decrease (some observers even say that Russia will lose interest in the regions because the game would be lost)
- There is danger that Georgia will receive its "carrot" without a "stick" and to some extent will lose its incentive for compromise (let's remember the case of Cyprus and the EU).

If events develop in this direction Tbilisi might be tempted to take a more uncompromising position, even with regard to NATO. This might push Tbilisi and the refugees/IDPs toward a more unceremonious attitude towards the Abkhaz, to kindling a revanchistic mood among the

refugees/IDPs, and that could provoke interethnic confrontation. It seems that Georgia ought to exclude such prospects firmly and clearly, even while it is so far away from joining NATO. Tbilisi ought to clearly and unambiguously let Brussels know that Georgia does not directly link the wish to join the alliance with the question of restoring its territorial integrity and that we are not going to make NATO a hostage of our internal problems. It is quite possible that we would keep on implementing the Membership Action Plan until NATO is fully convinced of this. Otherwise, we could still scare off even those NATO member states which support our early integration.

We cannot rule out a more optimistic scenario, which is that with NATO's help (or the help of countries in NATO, or the EU, or the OSCE) efforts will continue to find mutually satisfactory compromises.

Although the prospect of joining NATO seems much more realistic and closer than EU membership, the European Union, due to many factors that are well known to the conference participants, has great potential in terms of conflict resolution in Georgia. If we draw parallels with Cyprus, even given all the differences between Turkey and Russia, I don't think that Cyprus' membership in NATO could have convinced the Turkish Cypriots of the need for compromises that they are ready to make today. In my opinion, the prospect of Georgia's EU membership could help conflict resolution best by taking into account the long-term interests of both sides. By the way, many experts in Georgia think that the conflict could be resolved to mutual benefit if today we were talking not about integration in NATO but integration in the EU. Occasionally some independent experts in Tbilisi hint that the hypothetical membership of Georgia and Abkhazia in the EU as two sovereign states could eliminate most of the conflict.

Abkhaz society is suspicious about NATO for the following reasons:

- Memory of the Cold War is still fresh;
- The belief that this military-political alliance opposes Russia;
- NATO is favorably disposed toward Georgia, and whatever is good for Tbilisi, is bad for Sukhumi;
- Memory of punishment of "intractable" Serbia is still fresh (the fact that it brought actual de-facto independence to separatist Kosovo, is of little consolation, since Belgrade, like Sukhumi, is supported by Russia while Tbilisi and Pristina are considered the favorites of the West).

The EU is attractive to Sukhumi for several reasons:

- It is not a military-political bloc and consequently it does not pose any threat of aggression toward Abkhazia;
- The EU is attractive because it is associated with well-being and stability, whereas NATO is associated with compulsion through military pressure.

In these circumstances the EU's intensification of political initiatives, humanitarian, and economic projects could lead the sides out of a stupid, irrational negotiable deadlock and give the settlement an absolutely different long-term pragmatic dimension.

"... non-settlement of the conflicts should keep the alliance from admitting Georgia."

This is all the more possible because the EU is more or less acceptable for both sides in the conflict.

In conclusion, it seems that non-settlement of the conflicts should keep the alliance from admitting Georgia. If NATO decides to grant membership to Georgia it may happen earlier than the solution of these complex conflicts. Tbilisi understands that and so should Brussels. To bring Georgia closer to the final line of integration and then to say that it is impossible to proceed any further due to the conflicts means to seek a formal excuse for refusal while the true reason lies somewhere else.

### **PAPER: The EU and the Abkhaz Conflict in Georgia**

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#### **The EU and conflicts in South Caucasus.**

...The EU is becoming both increasingly aware and keen on playing a more proactive role in efforts to address the conflicts in the region. The EU has several advantages as an actor promoting conflict resolution and stability in the region.



The EU is the biggest peace project of our times and therefore a living example of how to successfully address the root causes of conflicts and build sustainable stability. This is the EU's soft power: leading by example and not by any desire to dictate solutions. This also hopefully can translate into the EU not being seen as a threat, and even more into the EU enjoying a considerable degree of confidence among all actors in the region.

The EU has also a unique transformative power because of its commitment to common values, such as human rights, the rule of law, free market economy, social justice. The extension of the ENP process to the South Caucasus embodies the EU efforts to apply this transformative influence in the region and represents a tangible contribution to efforts to bring stability.

But there is an additional concrete major development in EU's preparedness and capacity to play an important role in conflict prevention and resolution in the region. The EU has over the last few years developed considerably its institutions and instruments in common foreign and security policy. First, the EU has developed its political capabilities. Major examples are the appointment of Dr Javier Solana as the first EU High Representative in 1999, and subsequently the

“The EU is the biggest peace project of our times and therefore a living example of how to successfully address the root causes of conflicts and build sustainable stability.”

appointment of a number of EU Special Representatives (EUSR) for specific areas and problems such as the EUSR for South Caucasus, a post currently held by Ambassador Peter Semneby. And this has brought concrete results. A major example is the Balkans: the EU learned from mistakes in the 1990's, so by 2001 the EU High Representative was playing a crucial role in preventing the escalation of the crisis in Skopje and he was helping to negotiate

the Ohrid Agreement which effectively settled this crisis. There and elsewhere in the Balkans, the EU has always worked closely with NATO as a key partner.

But the EU has also seriously over the last few years improved its own operational capabilities to match and support its mediation and political initiatives in addressing crises. Since 2003, the EU has launched 16 military and civilian operations in areas of crises outside its borders, in the Balkans, the South Caucasus, Africa, Asia and elsewhere. This has helped much the EU to gain valuable experience and become a credible and full-fledged partner in international efforts in crisis management.

More concretely, in Georgia, the EU in 2004 launched the THEMIS mission to support the promotion of the rule of law, and in 2005 the EU also launched the Border Support Team in Georgia which assists the Georgian Border Guard and other relevant Georgian government institutions to pursue reforms and to develop their own capabilities.

### **Future EU involvement in Georgia and the Abkhazian conflict.**

This involvement is far from over. In line with the overall EU policy objective of contribution to conflict prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts in the region, the EU expressed its commitment in late 2006 to develop and implement measures aiming, mostly, at restoring confidence and improving the political climate in support of conflict resolution processes in Georgia. Such confidence building measures would specifically aim to facilitate contacts and provide incentives for increased interaction between Tbilisi and the conflict regions, decrease isolation and open up the affected regions to Europe, as well as lay the foundations for problem solving and sustainable solutions through dialogue and cooperation.

“...the EU expressed its commitment in late 2006 to develop and implement measures aiming, mostly, at restoring confidence and improving the political climate in support of conflict resolution processes in Georgia.”

To follow up this decision, in January 2007 the EU sent a EU expert team to Georgia, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in order to examine the situation on the ground, to investigate how existing EU instruments could be used to promote confidence-building and conflict resolution and to identify concrete potential confidence building measures which could be supported by the EU and implemented within the framework of EU-Georgia relations...

The EU member states together with the EUSR for South Caucasus and the European Commission discussed at length the expert team mission report and expressed broad support on nearly all recommendations for greater EU engagement on confidence building measures. The EUSR for South Caucasus is currently engaged in consultations with all actors, the Georgian government and the authorities in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, to identify measures agreed by all concerned where implementation can start as soon as possible.

Such confidence building measures could include general measures as well as specific measures targeting Abkhazia and South Ossetia. General projects could include capacity building and technical assistance in the Georgian Ministry of Conflict Resolution, the Georgian Ministry

of Civic Integration to promote minority rights, support for the Georgian customs authorities involving Abkhaz and South Ossetian relevant structures as well as EU sponsored international conferences on conflict resolution and minority rights involving all parties concerned.

More specific confidence building measures with regard to Abkhazia could include deployment of an EU police expert with UNOMIG with the aim to ensure liaison with UNOMIG Police Component in Abkhazia and to facilitate contacts between Georgian and Abkhazian relevant structures; the appointment of a Customs Advisor for Abkhazia in view of establishing the parameters of an EU customs project and promoting increased contacts between the Georgian customs and Abkhazia, especially exchange of information on customs issues; an invitation of relevant Abkhazian structures to participate on working-level in the South Caucasus Anti Drug programme; an effort to an agreement concerning de-mining issues between parties in order for the EU to support de-mining activities in Abkhazia; rehabilitation of infrastructure (e.g. houses, equipment of district hospitals, schools, water and sanitation) as well as business support with micro-credits for households, credits for SMEs and rural credits and other various agriculture projects (vaccination services, fight against caterpillar pest, extension services, etc); EU support to identify the obstacles in reaching an agreement in rehabilitation and management of the Black Sea Railways and finally, targeted efforts to enhance participation of Abkhazians in academic exchanges with the EU, information campaigns aimed at students at Sukhum/i University and through the development of European studies courses and related programmes at Sukhum/i University.

The EU is ready to start implementation of such confidence building measures as soon as possible as well as to explore and support further confidence building measures supported by the parties. Such confidence building measures may not alone be sufficient to resolve the conflicts but they can play an important role to decrease tensions, improve the general climate, re-engage the parties in dialogue and joint projects, decrease isolation in the conflict areas and generally contribute to strengthen the process of peaceful resolution of conflicts and diminish the risks of sliding back to violence.

“...such measures could only be the beginning of an increased EU role in contributing to bringing long-lasting stability in the region.”

These initiatives are a tangible demonstration of the increased commitment of the EU to conflict resolution in the region. Should the parties continue welcoming increased Europeanization of the international mediation efforts in the region, together with the European Neighborhood Policy which provides the main framework of the EU-South Caucasus relations, such measures could only be the beginning of an increased EU role in contributing to bringing long-lasting stability in the region.

**Magdalena Frichova, International Crisis Group. Tbilisi.** My focus is on the peace processes as such, and since the most assertive attempts for a change of dynamics in these processes have

come from Tbilisi, I will mainly examine dilemmas posed by recent Georgian strategies toward the conflicts.

We've seen over the past year that the negotiations are stalled on all levels in the Georgian-Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts. An important part of that development is, of course, the new Georgian strategy to change the status quo in these conflict resolution processes. Indeed, we've seen that Georgia is making very powerful moves to change both the peacekeeping formats of negotiations as such, and also the situation on the ground. For instance, the whole recent emergence and then strengthening of Mr. Sanakoev is one such big example. But we will come back specifically to this later.

What are the motivations behind Georgia's new assertive strategy? We've already touched upon a whole range of them during previous sessions. But I'll just reiterate the main ones. Mr. Saakashvili...wants to build a powerful unified Georgia with strong credible institutions, and that is by not only wanting to reintegrate the conflict zones, but also by increasing the capacities of his power structures and trying to do some reforms in the areas of justice, criminal justice, etc. So we have seen many developments on that front.

Restoration of territorial integrity has been a key electoral promise as well as a highlight of his strategy presented to the international community. I think it is, indeed, not far from imaginable that he is now pushing that agenda more quickly because the promises need to be delivered, or at least tackled somehow substantially before the elections next year...

The last point that I would like to dwell on the most is the unprecedented level of Georgia's frustration with the role that Russia is playing in the conflict resolution processes and the conflict regions. The Georgian side is dead-set to counter Russia's role and involvement. Georgia is on a mission to prove to the international community that Russia is not an honest broker, that it plays a destructive role. We hear the rhetoric in Mr. Saakashvili's speeches when he talks of Russia's attempts to annex Georgia's territories and to occupy the country.

I think there are some arguments that deserve merit. Some are stronger than others. And I would also like to stress that the cases of Abkhazia and South Ossetia seem very different.

In the previous debates, we have already touched on the border security issue. Issues of border security are crucial in the Georgian argumentation that conflict regions in fact pose a far reaching regional or even global threat. By raising its lack of control over the Roki Tunnel connecting Russia's North Ossetia with South Ossetia, and claiming arms are transiting the tunnel but possibly also dangerous substances, the Georgian side is powerfully tapping into the current security and antiterrorism discourse, arguing that there is a lack of control with potentially regional or even wider implications. Earlier this year, articles appeared debating the smuggling of highly enriched uranium. A situation which allows for this type of security concern directly destroys any confidence in the conflict resolution process. By extension, one of Tbilisi's lines has been that in order to

"...Georgia feels very vulnerable to Moscow. Unless that fear is addressed, perhaps by the international community, or even recognized by Moscow itself, we are unlikely to see positive developments in the resolution processes."

become a provider of security, it needs to contain Russia, at least in terms of its role in the conflict regions.

I also believe that Georgia feels very vulnerable to Moscow. Unless that fear is addressed, perhaps by the international community, or even recognized by Moscow itself, we are unlikely to see positive developments in the resolution processes. This applies particularly to the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, but also to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Unless the sides recognize that Georgia's security fears vis a vis Moscow need to be taken in all seriousness, Georgia is unlikely to play a constructive role in the current negotiation formats. I want to stress this because we often say that Georgia needs to address the security fears of the conflict regions. I absolutely agree with that. I think it is crucial that Tbilisi should address the security fears of the conflict regions, and engage in a discussion of and provide adequate security guarantees, including agreements on non-use of force, turning down militant rhetoric, make military budgets transparent. But we must not forget Georgia's own security concerns. Can the two sets of insecurities be addressed in parallel? Can there be a mechanism whereby, in a sense, the fears underlying the Georgian-Abkhaz or Ossetian and Georgian-Russian conflicts were addressed at the same time?...

"I think it is crucial that Tbilisi should address the security fears of the conflict regions, and engage in a discussion of and provide adequate security guarantees, including agreements on non-use of force, turning down militant rhetoric, make military budgets transparent."

In its conflict resolution strategies, Tbilisi is emphasizing the point that Russia must be contained, that Russia is the core source of problems, and that it is acting with a degree of impunity in the conflict regions. The message that Georgia is being threatened from the North is easily one of the most important points that resonate in speeches of the political elite in Tbilisi.

At the same time I think that the Georgian side is by and large failing to recognize and address the other crucial aspect of the ethno-territorial dispute with the Abkhaz and Ossetians: the interethnic aspect of the conflicts. Tbilisi needs to focus on extending constructive messages with the conflict regions and convince their populations of the merit of dialogue or in the future possibly cooperation, not trying to contain Russia alone. That will not address the issues that need to be resolved in the relationships with the Abkhaz and the Ossetians.

... Georgia should try to demonstrate to the populations of the conflict regions that it can respect their aspirations and acknowledge their fears. Yes Georgia has detailed a number of plans stressing its nonviolent or possibly development oriented strategies. At the same time, these plans have all been unilateral and present solutions for which there is no support in either of the conflict regions. The perceptions in South Ossetia and Abkhazia seem to be that Tbilisi is simply failing to even engage in a dialogue. Instead it is preoccupied with delivering on the demands of peaceful resolution that the West is placing on Georgia, and delivering on electoral promises the leadership has locked itself into. So, for instance, when Mr. Nogaideli presented a peace plan in New York which discussed the need for a speedy peaceful resolution but was largely reflective of the Georgian negotiating positions, it was not only a non-starter for the

Abkhaz side, it also fueled concerns or perceptions among the Abkhaz that Georgia has little will for genuine dialogue on difficult issues, but by stressing its peaceful resolution aspirations, it still comes across to the international community as being constructive. There has been a growing sense that Tbilisi is trying to solve the conflicts quickly and on its own terms mainly. At the same time the recent peace initiatives have been to a great degree unilateral and are not viewed in either Sukhum/i or Tskhinval/i as feasible starting points for any discussion.

This is where I would like to come to the role that international organizations and NATO in particular can play. We've discussed from all different sides the dilemmas about whether NATO is actually ready and has the political will to accept an ally whose accession would bring about a confrontation with Russia and who has two unresolved conflicts on its territory, where Russian soldiers serve as peacekeepers. We have also discussed to what degree the Georgia NATO accession debate can influence the conflict resolution processes. James said several times that there is a consensus in NATO that it is not an organization that can provide conflict resolution know-how. It can only influence the context. It cannot get involved directly at the moment in the peace processes. I think that is clear and fair enough.

I do think, however, that an important role that NATO can play at the moment is not only to impress on Georgia the need for peaceful resolution, but it should actually provide a mirror that would reflect on how the professed goal is being achieved. There should be strong political will in the alliance to be rigorous with criticism and feedback. In a sense the discussion yesterday was circling around that—NATO is impressing on Georgia the need for conflict resolution, and Georgia says it is taking steps for peaceful conflict resolution, but the conflict regions are not convinced of this and are not a part of any of that debate. Just how is that feedback to Tbilisi being given? What are the options for a more constructively critical hands-on engagement which will also consider the needs and fears of the conflict regions? Difficult questions need to be asked - for instance, Is the Sanakoyev strategy something that is remotely seen by the Ossetians as having potential for providing new resolution opportunities? At the moment this is not the case. What can be done to change the strategy so that it also reflects the interests of the Ossetian or Abkhaz constituency?

The debate with the Western partners that Georgia has entered into absolutely must have very open, honest, and strong feedback. The question that I think is fair to ask is whether there has been political will among the foreign partners to provide that feedback. And in what ways this has been done - if only behind closed doors, what are the resonances of that in the society. We touched upon all that yesterday. To push the point further, one perhaps also needs to distinguish between the role the U.S. and the rest of Western international community have played. All over the region, the perception is that the role of the US, especially given the current administration, is such that even if Western European partners, for instance, push for a different benchmark, they have a very small case, because in a sense there is such political resolve on the side of the American partner. I think this is perhaps one of the most important criticisms that I often hear of the shortcomings of the dialogue between Tbilisi and the Western partners. The

international community needs to consider this before its own credibility in terms of providing rigorous feedback could be questioned.

Unless that criticism or that feedback is provided, the Western institutions, including NATO, risk being instrumentalized by the Georgian partner that does have a monopoly over access to and dialogue with the conflict regions, except for a few international NGOs and the UN and the OSCE Missions. In the conflict regions populations do not yet seem convinced that the West so far has the capacity to take their aspirations seriously. Starting at least from a dialogue on this of level is crucial... Obviously the challenge is how to develop on this. I think it is quite clear that Sukhum/i will not be interested in engaging in any discussion or assistance that would be channeled through Tbilisi.

There has been no interest on the part of the conflict regions to get interested in that way. At the same time Tbilisi has a great wish to use the dialogue with the European and Euro-Atlantic organizations to actually get a better foot in the conflict regions, as the example of the debate about the ENP and its funding mechanisms showed. I don't have an answer except that direct communication channels must be kept for the alliance to understand the Abkhaz perspectives from Sukhumi, not through the Tbilisi interpretations. B it is a question that needs to be asked...

By way of conclusion, I want to return to the key questions that must be answered within the alliance—is NATO ready to accept a country with two internal conflicts, and through that enter into a conflict relationship with Russia? If so, in what ways? These are crucial questions and require rigorous thinking and analysis.

My sense from an experience recently in a NATO seminar in Tbilisi is that these questions provoke distressed reactions in Tbilisi because they are seen as a threat to Georgian aspirations. It is important to find a way to speak with the Georgians about these questions, to actually ask and address them, and get into a substantive debate even though they are so difficult for the Georgian side to tackle because they can be perceived as a threat to the aspiration itself on which the overall foreign policy and orientation is built.

## DISCUSSION

**Archil Gegeshidze.** To what extent do you think that the existing negotiating and peacekeeping formats should be Europeanized?

**Alexandros Yannis.** We believe that the time has come for the EU to play a more active role in the current formats. The OSCE, UN, individual countries, and Russia are our partners. The question is how to enable the EU, which is increasing its role and its leverage in the region, to match its other means with its political role.

**James Mackey.** Magdalena, how much independence of action do the Abkhaz authorities have right now, and how much are they receiving their orders from Moscow? I think this plays a crucial

role in determining whether the road to peace leads through Sukhumi or through Moscow. For Vyacheslav, you said that people in Abkhazia go from neutral to opposed in their opinions of NATO. Are there any concrete measures or ideas that you have for ways that either the Georgian authorities or NATO could address some of these concerns of the Abkhaz people? What are some of the key fears or key questions that need to be addressed in order to build confidence? Can you propose concrete steps that NATO or the Georgian authorities can take to address these issues?

**Magdalena Frichova.** The 2004 presidential election in Abkhazia was a very strong indicator that the Abkhaz constituency will not go along with an imposed solution from Moscow. Since then the relationship has become much more nuanced. Even before 2004, Abkhaz civil society has stressed to us that there is no misperception in Abkhazia as to what role Russia is trying to play. They say that Russia is interested in Abkhazia's territory and not the people. Since 2004 I've heard this even from Abkhaz de facto officials. That is also a big indicator to me about change.

**Jonathan Cohen.** An endlessly important point is the perceptions of Abkhazia in Tbilisi and the preparedness to engage with Abkhazia or not. I think that within the Georgian government at this time amongst a number of officials there is almost a phobia in regard to what's happening in Abkhazia. In the last month I've had meetings with several ministers and deputy ministers who have used the word fascistic in describing Abkhaz society. I think this attitude in Tbilisi is quite undermining to develop adequate approaches to resolve the conflict. Yannis, you made a very important point about focusing on process, and if you get the process going that will create the terms of success. We have to be very frank and honest with ourselves about the negotiation process. Rightly or wrongly we've already determined the outcome of the negotiation process with regard to Abkhazia. That is an absolutely legitimate position within the international community to take, but it also has to accept that there are consequences to that. One of the consequences is that the Abkhaz are pushed back into a very defensive position constantly, because they don't think they can achieve what they want through the negotiation process. This feeds into the dynamic of frustration that comes from the Georgia authorities, because they also feel they're not getting what they want from the negotiation process. This heightens the frustration and leads to certain degrees of aggressiveness or precipitated behavior. That is something we need to find ways to step back from so that we can think about the process rather than the outcome, and can encourage real confidence building.



**Alexandros Yannis.** Jonathan made a point about the process and the outcome. Indeed, the EU has a position on Abkhazia, South Ossetia and the territorial integrity of Georgia. This does not

mean that the process, as you said, cannot have a very important impact on making a solution within this context, an acceptable solution to everybody. Today it looks impossible because we are very far away from the solution. But we want to contribute to the transformative power of the process by bringing us closer to a possible solution. Having a general position doesn't mean that there isn't a lot of room within these positions where you can do a lot of work.

**Liana Kvarchelia.** The fundamental flaw in the negotiation process, and in all the processes around Abkhazia and Georgia lies in the fact that the process itself is ruled by a solution, and this solution reflects exclusively Georgia's aspirations. What we need is a process that will lead to a solution rather than vice versa. This is where the inequality stems from. This inequality also manifests itself in differing international responses to the steps taken by the conflict sides.

**Vyacheslav Chirikba.** Regarding your question, James, about the most important fears from the Abkhaz side about the Georgian accession to NATO. We were part of one state which disintegrated, and on one beautiful day we woke up in another state without being asked whether we want to be in this state or not. Within a month after this new state of Georgia which we found ourselves in was admitted into the United Nations it started war against Abkhazia. Georgia gained new legitimacy, new international strength as a sovereign state, which it didn't have before that. This was a very painful lesson of recent history which we cannot forget at all. The most important fear in Abkhazia is that NATO will bring to Georgia so many resources—financial, military expertise, counseling, equipment, hardware, software—that it will make the Georgian army much, much more powerful than it is now. This will create an enormous imbalance between the capacities of the Abkhaz army. This is, of course, a direct threat to our security. Another concern of ours is that the Georgian authorities themselves make it no secret that they connect their accession process and the outcome of this process with the issue of restoring the territorial integrity of Georgia. This has been made clear by top Georgian officials, and is heard by Abkhaz society. We haven't heard from NATO about its guarantees that it will not allow its capacities to be used against Abkhazia.



**Natella Akaba.** We have always appreciated the EU's sensitivity to ethnic and cultural diversity and concern about the preservation of cultures. This is extremely important to the Abkhaz. That's why we have seen the EU as an alternative to Russian influence. But it seems that these are false expectations because the EU can't play as active a role as NATO. Everything I've heard at this conference confirms my fear that the mediators in our conflict are in competition with each other and that will significantly hinder progress toward peace.

**Alexandros Yanniss.** We do not talk in terms of countering Russia's influence. We are partners with Russia. I have said this over and over. We may have a different appreciation of the issues, but this is legitimate among partners. Inside the European Union we have different appreciation of so many things. This doesn't make us less of partners. We are trying to Europeanize in terms of sharing common values, which we think we do--human rights, rule of law, democracy, the common market, etc. This is what the EU stands for.

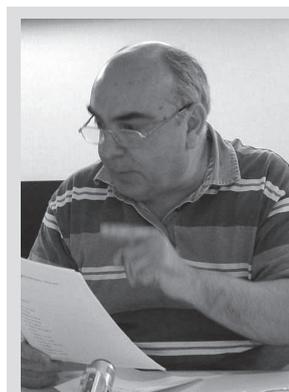
**Inal Khashig.** Under what circumstances, James, would NATO insist that for Georgia to become a member it will have to sign an agreement that it will resolve its conflict with Abkhazia only by peaceful means?

**James Mackey.** Will NATO demand a nonaggression treaty before allowing Georgia to move forward? I will be completely honest with you, I don't know. NATO is composed of 26 states, each of which has its own view of the conflict. In closing I just want to stress again the importance of these dialogues. I wholeheartedly agree with you that I hope that the next interaction is not one that takes place a year from now organized by the Boell Foundation. We are working to try to bring Abkhaz and Ossetian groups to NATO headquarters. But I stress again that NATO will not get involved in conflict resolution.

**Arda Inal-Ipa.** We see that the international organizations know very well where the border is between Georgia and Abkhazia. For instance, NATO is only strengthening the Georgian army. The EC is strengthening the legal system in Georgia, but not in Abkhazia. When it comes to spending money we see that Europe and the United States, and all international organizations know where the border is. The only financing to Abkhazia is for confidence building. It's so naïve to think that if you strengthen one side of the conflict you can build trust between both sides.

**Alexandros Yanniss.** The reactions are quite understandable, because it is a conflict. It's not an easy situation, so we understand. This gives us a responsibility to listen more to you and to work with you for solutions. There is no solution through the use of force. The EU will remain very firm on this. When we diminish the opportunities for violence, and the conflict resolution measures can only contribute in this direction, then we can start talking about solutions.

**Vakhtang Kolbaya.** Several times James has lamented that no one from the Georgian government is at this conference, the people who can influence policy. The people here, I mean myself, don't impact policy. We ask that the EU to convince the Georgian government to be active in the negotiation process, and not to walk away from dialogue. I've gained so much from our dialogue, but if we can't get through to the decision makers our voices are like a cry for help in the desert. I really understand Arda's frustration with the international community.



**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** I can understand from your perspective a certain degree of frustration. I hope you might understand my frustration as well. After one and a half days of discussion I am a bit puzzled, even shocked about some of the approaches I heard sometimes in the discussions. The international community, be it the EU or NATO, is offering a certain number of instruments to develop a democratic society, democratized armed forces, the rule of law, economic development infrastructure, etc. That is the logic and it's absolutely coherent. It is the logic of cooperation, of friendship, of stability through finding common ground. But we are confronted by two parties that are apparently trying to use our logic to instrumentalize us to participate in a conflict that follows the opposite logic. You don't want to cooperate. There is opposition.

**Bruno Coppieters.** This was the whole topic of the seminar, the possibility that NATO would get instrumentalized by one of the parties and that it should not be instrumentalized, and that NATO should have a positive influence on the conflict, and not worsen it. I think that the fear of being instrumentalized is completely legitimate.

Slava Chirikba has clearly explained that there is a whole political environment that makes it impossible that NATO would support a unilateral Georgian military intervention in Abkhazia. But on the other side there are objective consequences of Georgia's entry into NATO, and that is the increased asymmetry between the conflicts. It is not enough to say that you have two parties that must come to an agreement. Those two parties are in an unequal relationship, both to the EU and surely to NATO. NATO membership would increase this asymmetry, and like Slava says, it could threaten the survival of Abkhazia. What will NATO do about this?

**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** It frustrates me that we are discussing the possibility that NATO might be an ally for war, for a violent resolution of such a conflict. This is so far away from our reasoning, from our objectives, from our approach that it is unacceptable. It is frustrating. Having said that, by no means does NATO want or accept being drawn into a violent solution of the conflict. This must be entirely out of the discussion. It is not an option. You say objectively that it might be instrumentalized in a way that creates conditions that might make violent conflict resolution more probable. I don't believe that at all. Why? James explained one point very strongly and at length. What the EU and NATO are doing through processes of partnership and neighborhood policy is changing one part of the equation, one actor. Now Bruno says that objectively there is the creation of an asymmetric situation that is freezing conflict. If you accept the premises of this reasoning then you come to this result. But I don't accept these premises. In my opinion it is unfair to say that if a conflict is deeply rooted and is not moving for a long time, and then one of the actors is entering an international organization that has a restraining influence and a democratically changing influence on him, makes him a more responsible actor, is then responsible for the fact that this organization is not solving this conflict that he is in for a long, long time. I think that is asking too much of the EU or NATO. If Abkhazia and Georgia don't come to terms

with their conflict it is certainly not the responsibility of NATO in an asymmetric situation. NATO and the EU will give instruments to work better together. They will hinder one actor, in this case the Georgian government, from using force to solve the problem.

**Archil Gegeshidze.** When we came to this conference we had an a priori feeling that the process of Georgia's accession to NATO has and will have an impact on the conflict in Abkhazia. Our discussions have revealed even more questions about this than we had initially. We'll be leaving with more unanswered questions than answered ones. The discussions have also revealed, understandably, that our Abkhaz colleagues and perhaps some of our other participants have seen this process more of a danger than a solution to the problem. Nevertheless, it is very likely that this process of Georgia's accession to NATO will continue further. So we have to find answers to all possible questions that this process might generate. There is an obvious lack of understanding about NATO's genuine objectives, capabilities and the role it can play in the conflict in Abkhazia. More clarification is needed in both societies, but especially in Abkhaz society. In more general terms Abkhaz society needs help in being exposed to the outside world, not only just to NATO, but also to the EU and to the world at large.

**Paata Zakareishvili.** I regret that there's been no dialogue between the Georgians and the Abkhaz ever since Georgia has won the uncritical support of the West. There were negotiations, but they ended when the West began supporting Georgia without reservation. As a Georgian citizen I fear that the methods being used will not resolve the conflict.

**Jan Hendrik van Thiel.** If the government of Georgia or any other party in this conflict uses its contact with international organizations in the internal sphere to present a position that is actually not agreed upon by this international organization, and helps to heat up the conflict, it is our responsibility to do something about this. We give clear messages to our interlocutors who abuse these contacts that this is not welcome and should not be done.

**Walter Kaufmann.** On behalf of Paula Garb, representing the Center for Citizen Peacebuilding at UCI, and myself, representing the Heinrich Boell Foundation, the co-organizers of this conference, I thank everyone who participated with such interesting and important presentations, comments, and questions.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Use NATO's extensive public diplomacy program to better inform the people and their leaders in Georgia/Abkhazia about the organization's values, principles, and policies.** The public diplomacy program supports a wide range of academic research between state parties that are either members or potential members. The purpose of such participation is to expand horizons, and broaden debate. Include in such projects people from unrecognized entities. There are sensitivities, it is necessary to resist requests from governments that might be against participation of people from unrecognized entities. NATO does not need to recognize the jurisdictions. It can do this without implicit recognition of Abkhazia. If the voices from the unrecognized entities could be heard through various projects or regional organizations, the conflicts would be easier to resolve. Conduct a more proactive public diplomacy effort in Georgia to explain NATO's limitations, objectives, and policies toward Georgia without necessarily criticizing the government. Develop more explicit conditionality linked to peaceful conflict resolution, as was done with Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Balkans.
- **Open direct channels of communication between NATO/EU and Abkhaz civil society and Georgian civil society.** Abkhaz society needs help in being exposed to the outside world, not only to NATO, but also to the EU and to the world at large.
- **Implement a wide range of confidence building measures through the EU, other regional organizations, and international organizations.** Break the suspicion and lack of trust on the part of the Abkhaz first and foremost toward NATO. Participants wholeheartedly supported the EU's proposed confidence building measures: deployment of an EU police expert with UNOMIG to ensure liaison with the UNOMIG Police Component in Abkhazia and to facilitate contacts between Georgian and Abkhaz relevant structures; the appointment of a Customs Advisor for Abkhazia in view of establishing the parameters of an EU customs project and promoting increased contacts between Georgian customs and Abkhazia, especially exchange of information on customs issues; an invitation of relevant Abkhaz structures to participate on a working level in the South Caucasus Anti Drug Program; an effort to an agreement concerning demining issues between parties in order for the EU to support demining activities in Abkhazia; rehabilitation of infrastructure (e.g. houses, equipment of district hospitals, schools, water and sanitation) as well as business support with micro credits for households, credits for SMEs and rural credits and other various agriculture projects (vaccination services, fight against caterpillar pest, extension services, etc); EU support to identify the obstacles in reaching an agreement in rehabilitation and management of the Black Sea Railways and finally, targeted efforts to enhance participation of Abkhaz in academic exchanges with the EU, information campaigns aimed at students at Sukhumi University and through the development of European studies courses and related programs at Sukhumi University.

- **The EU and EC should consider establishing a European university in Abkhazia.** Participants realize that this would be a major undertaking, and recommend that meanwhile a Europe House could be established in Sukhum/i to serve as an information agency.
- **Change the official negotiation format within the legal constraints of international organizations in order to concentrate more on a process of creative and constructive efforts toward a mutually satisfactory resolution of the conflict rather than try to fit a prescribed outcome to a process.** Participants understand that the international community has to adhere to international law, and cannot act with de facto states on the same level as with internationally recognized states. At the same time they argued that because the outcome of the negotiation process with regard to Abkhazia has been predetermined the consequences are that the Abkhaz retreat into a defensive position, because they cannot get their interests met in the negotiation process. This feeds into the dynamic of frustration that comes from the Georgia authorities, because they also feel they're not getting what they want from the negotiation process. This heightens the frustration and leads to certain degrees of aggressiveness or precipitated behavior.
- **NATO should encourage the Georgian government to sign the declaration on nonresumption of hostilities, and to discontinue making statements about reserving the right to use force.** This reservation of the right to use force undermines any declarations of peaceful intentions. It undermines the perception of peaceful intentions from the interlocutor on the other side. That is very damaging to any notion of confidence. Very high ranking NATO officials when visiting Georgia should make clear statements in parliament that NATO accession is possible only in the case of peaceful resolution of conflicts. Several Georgian participants advocated that Georgia provide such a guarantee and sign the existing document.
- **NATO and the EU should encourage the Georgian and Abkhaz authorities to allow officials to participate in nongovernmental Abkhaz-Georgian confidence building meetings.** Participants expressed regret that invited Georgian officials declined to attend this conference, and therefore Abkhaz officials declined to participate. It is feasible to have an extremely constructive and creative environment such as the one at this conference and the hundreds of other meetings that nongovernmental organizations have convened over the past 15 years. It is, however, difficult to take the insights from this forum into the wider public or into the political domain. NATO and the EU have a degree of weight that the nongovernmental organizations do not. If that weight could influence the way in which the governments are prepared to communicate across the conflict in nongovernmental and unofficial formats and to their societies, it would contribute greatly to confidence building and peaceful conflict resolution.

- **NATO officials should seek every opportunity to answer all possible questions that arise about how this process of NATO accession can guarantee peace and stability in the conflict zones.** The conference discussions revealed an obvious lack of understanding about NATO's objectives, capabilities and the role it can play in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. More clarification is needed in both societies. Participants noted that discussions resulted in even more questions about these issues than they had initially, and left with unanswered questions than answered ones. The discussions also showed that the Abkhaz colleagues, as well as some others, regard the Georgian NATO accession process as more of a danger than a solution to the conflict.
- **Some coordination, a division of labor and synergy is needed between NATO and the EU to promote their agendas in the region.** It is increasingly obvious that the conflict is an important factor that is becoming an impediment to the fulfillment of the agendas that separately NATO and the EU are set to implement in Georgia. Discussions revealed that individually, neither NATO nor the EU can tackle this obstacle. Each institution may have leverage in different spheres that could promote peaceful conflict resolution. In a parallel process NATO should consider clarifying in Abkhazia its goals and objectives in this region. In this regard, NATO information centers, workshops, and visits to Brussels will be helpful. The EU should promote its values, establish elements of political, legal, and administrative systems in Abkhazia, and think about how it should be done parallel to the existing frameworks that the EU has with Georgia.

## APPENDIX

### List of Conference Participants

- Akaba, Natella**, Association of Women of Abkhazia, Sukhum/i
- Chirikba, Vjacheslav**, Center for Strategic Studies, Sukhum/i
- Chkadua, Ibragim**, Newspaper “Forum”, Sukhum/i
- Cohen, Jonathan**, NGO Conciliation Resources, London
- Coppieters, Bruno**, Free University, Brussels
- Frichova, Magdalena**, International Crisis Group, Tbilisi
- Garb, Paula**, University of California, Irvine
- Gegeshidze, Archil**, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, Tbilisi
- Gurgulia, Manana**, Sukhum/i Media Club, Sukhum/i
- Hermisson, Bastian**, Heinrich-Böll-Foundation Berlin
- Inal-Ipa, Arda**, Abkhaz coordinator of Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue projects, Centre for Humanitarian Programmes, Sukhum/i
- Kakabadze, Ninia**, Newspaper 24 Hours, Tbilisi
- Kaufmann, Walter**, Heinrich-Böll-Foundation Tbilisi
- Khashig, Inal**, Newspaper “Chegemskaja Pravda”, Sukhum/i
- Khmaladze, Vakhtang**, Developers Association, Tbilisi
- Kolbaia, Vakhtang**, NGO “Caucasian Dialogue”, Tbilisi
- Kvarchelia, Liana**, Centre for Humanitarian Programmes, Sukhum/i
- Mackey, James**, NATO Headquarters, Brussels
- Nies, Susanne**, Institut de Relations Internationales et Strategiques, Paris
- Pachuashvili, Zaza**, Newspaper 24 Hours, Tbilisi
- Pichkhadze, Shalva**, NGO “Georgia for NATO”, Tbilisi
- Ryabov, Andrey**, Gorbachev Foundation, Moscow
- Shvangiradze, Tamuna**, Heinrich-Böll-Foundation Tbilisi
- van Thiel, Jan Hendrick**, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris
- Yannis, Alexandros**, Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Brussels
- Zakareishvili, Paata**, Georgian coordinator of Georgian-Abkhazian dialogue projects, Tbilisi

