

## Chapter 5

# Regional and International Organisations in Georgia

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In order to analyse the history, meaning and purpose of political mediation by International Organisations and Country Representatives in the Republic of Georgia, it is necessary to give a short historic overview of the different territorial conflict situations in the Southern Caucasus, with a special emphasis on Georgia.

The territorial division of the Southern Caucasus can be described as the most complex one of the former Soviet Union with the exclusion of Russia herself and certain enclave regulations in Central Asia. Within Georgia one can find:

- the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia
- the Autonomous Republic of Adjara
- the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia

In a region further split into

- the Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan, belonging to Azerbaijan, but territorially separated from it, bordering immediately on Armenia and
- the Autonomous Region of Nagorny Karabakh, belonging to Azerbaijan, but predominantly populated by Armenians, separated from Armenia sometimes only by 10 kilometres.

The Soviet territorial division for the Southern Caucasus resulted in three Union Republics (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia – today independent States), three Autonomous Republics (Adjara, Abkhazia, Nakhichevan) and two Autonomous Regions (Nagorny Karabakh, South-Ossetia). A short description of the three entities within Georgia will give us the following picture:

### **Abkhazia**

Situated in the north western part of Georgia, bordering the Black Sea and Russia, 8.600 km<sup>2</sup> (roughly 1/10 of Georgia's territory), population of about 230.000, but 525.000 before the conflict. The composition of

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the personal opinion of the author – an Austrian diplomat - and does not reflect the official position of her home country.

the population as of today is approximately 40 per cent Abkhaz, 22 per cent Russians, 15 per cent Armenians, 5 per cent Georgians. The respective figures before the conflict: 46 per cent Georgians, 18 per cent Abkhaz, 15 per cent Armenians, 14 per cent Russians. The Abkhaz themselves are partly Sunni Moslems, their language belongs to the Caucasian group, but is different from Georgian, as it belongs to a different branch (north western group, closer to e.g. Chechen), and use the Cyrillic alphabet since 1945.

### **Adjara**

Situated in the south western part of Georgia, bordering the Black Sea and Turkey and the predominantly Armenian populated Akhaltsike region in Georgia; 3.000 km<sup>2</sup> (roughly 1/25 of Georgia), population of about 371.000. The population is mostly composed of Sunni Moslem Georgians, the reason for having introduced autonomy thus being predominantly a religious one.

### **South Ossetia**

Situated in northern Georgia, bordering the Russian Federation/North Ossetia (Alania); 3.900 km<sup>2</sup> (roughly 1/20 of Georgia), population of about 85.000 (99.500 before the conflict), the composition of the population is approximately 66 per cent Ossetians, 29 per cent Georgians, 2 per cent Russians, 1 per cent Armenians. The Ossetians are one of the few Iranian peoples in the Caucasus using the Cyrillic alphabet for their Iranian language, and are predominantly Orthodox. It has however also to be mentioned that out of a population of 632.000 in North Ossetia/Alania 55 per cent are Ossetians as well. In the Abkhaz as well as South Ossetian case it has to be pointed out that a rather high percentage of the respective populations have recently obtained Russian citizenship.

In order to describe the individual conflicts (in alphabetical order) and the different solution mechanisms undertaken by international organizations and the role some countries or group of countries played, we can start with Abkhazia and introduce also some glimpses of Abkhaz history which might contribute to a better understanding of at least some features of the ongoing conflict.

### **Abkhazia**

Abkhazia, Christianised in the 6th century, became an independent kingdom in the 9th century and joined Georgia in 978. From the 15th century onwards it was part of the Ottoman Empire, the population became Muslim. In 1810 it became a Russian protectorate, 1864 part of Tsarist Russia, when many people left for the Ottoman Empire. Still today one can find an important percentage of Abkhaz descendants in Turkey. In 1917 Abkhazia joined the Union of the Peoples of the Northern Caucasus; in 1921 the Red Army conquered Abkhazia at the same time as the other parts of the Southern Caucasus. At the beginning

Abkhazia had the status of an own Soviet Republic with an own constitution (1925), being as member of the Caucasian Federation also founding member of the Soviet Union. In 1930 Stalin changed her status to the one of an Autonomous Republic within Georgia – a step that many interpreted as a present of the Georgian Stalin to his homeland.

During the more liberal times nearing the end of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, Abkhazia tried several times already in 1987 and 1988 to secede from Georgia. In August 1990 the Abkhaz Parliament, taking advantage of a moment where the Georgian deputies to the Parliament were not in Abkhazia, declared Abkhazia's independence from Georgia, thus contributing to the aggravation of the already tense situation in Abkhazia. In fall 1991 parliamentary elections on the basis of a system disadvantaging the majority Georgian population took place. After the fall of the Georgian president Gamsakhurdia pro-Gamsakhurdia and anti-Gamsakhurdia factions formed themselves within Abkhazia thus aggravating the already existing Georgian-Abkhaz antagonism.

In July 1992 the Abkhaz Parliament (though with a small majority) reinstated the Abkhaz constitution from 1925 which practically meant secession from Georgia – a fact that was of course not accepted by the Georgian central authorities which decided – after some additional provocations – to send military troops to Abkhazia, which were defeated after heavy fighting in summer 1992 and which led to an exodus of the Georgian population from Abkhazia. It has been widely acknowledged that the victorious Abkhaz troops had been supported by Russian forces.

The first cease-fire was signed in Moscow in September 3 that year. Partner to this cease-fire was not only Russia, but also the – termed illegal by Russia - Confederation of the Caucasian Mountain Peoples (a confederation of about 15 predominantly Moslem mountain peoples in the six Autonomous North Caucasian Republics of Russia, with late Chechen President Dudaev as driving force behind), who also sent mercenaries to Abkhazia to support her in the fight against Georgia. The above mentioned cease-fire as many others in the future was never really respected up to the cease-fire and troops disengagement agreement of May 14, 1994 signed again in Moscow, but under UN chairmanship.

In September 1992 the first mission of the United Nations General Secretary was dispatched to Georgia/Abkhazia, followed by the deployment of the first ever United Nations Peace Keeping Forces on the territory of the former Soviet Union, UNOMIG (United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia. The essential mandate of UNOMIG (180 personnel) is:

- Monitoring of the cease-fire and troop disengagement agreement
- Maintaining relations with the CIS PKF and monitoring of them
- Controlling of the troop withdrawal from the security zone
- Maintaining relations with the conflicting Parties
- Patrols in the Kodori Valley (located in Abkhazia but under Georgian control).

In November 1992 an OSCE long-term Mission started also its operation in Tbilisi. After some time it developed in such a way, that the UN Mission was exclusively tasked with the Abkhaz problem, the OSCE mission, apart from its general Georgian mandate, tasked with conflict solution in South Ossetia.

Since 1993 Georgian-Abkhaz negotiations take place in Geneva (or other places) under UN-umbrella and with Russia as facilitator, the main themes today being economic cooperation, return of IDPs and refugees, political and security matters. The Special Representatives of the UN General Secretary have so far been very often Suisse nationals, with exception of a Rumanian diplomat and the German Boden who was instrumental in elaborating the so called “Boden-paper” – basis for today’s negotiations on the sharing of competences between the Georgian central authorities and the Abkhaz leadership.

Within the United Nations the group of “Friends of the Secretary General of the United Nations” (formerly the “Friends of Georgia”), comprising France, Germany, Great Britain, Russia and the US was established to promote a peaceful conflict solution. On the NGO level Georgian-Abkhaz discussions take place since 1996 on a more or less regular schedule in Germany or Austria (Peace University Stadtschlaining). After the 1994 cease-fire the CIS, predominantly Russia, also deployed a PKF (2.500 personnel) to Abkhazia that cooperate in certain aspects with the UN PKF. In 1996 the UN (High Commissioner for Human Rights) together with the OSCE established a Human Rights Office in Abkhazia/Sukhumi. The long sought for OSCE office in the Gali region could so far not start operation due to security reasons.

Since then Abkhazia declared an independent State with its own state structures and the Abkhaz Parliament declared its willingness to join the Russian Federation – a desire that could not be realized until today. On the other hand side Russia granted a high percentage of the Abkhaz population Russian citizenship and visa-free travel to Russia, whereas Georgian citizens have to obtain visas for their visits to Russia.

As of today the most pertinent questions continue to be:

- The Status of Abkhazia: Georgia is not willing to compromise on her territorial integrity. Abkhazia insists on her independence or integration with Russia
- The Return of IDPs: Georgia insists on the return of all the IDPs, which will automatically lead to a new lack of balance in the composition of the population disadvantaging the ethnic Abkhaz. Abkhaz offers to let the IDPs return were so far not accepted by Georgia due to security reasons

So far we have dealt with the highlights of the historic developments of Abkhazia and its conflict with Georgia, putting a certain emphasis on the international players (UN, OSCE) as well as the traditionally involved States, mainly Russia. Now we can consider analysing recent events concerning Abkhazia, starting in 1993 and try to scrutinize also the role

of other State players or international organisations that could eventually be seen as having to play a role in the region or the conflict solution.

Let us start with the CIS and its individual members. Georgia, as is well known, did not join the CIS after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but was more or less forced to do so in 1993 in connection with the Abkhaz crisis, hoping that an eventual CIS membership would lead to a solution of the Abkhaz crisis respecting also Georgian interests. The assumption that Russia was actually supporting Abkhazia in this conflict and had no interest to solve it in order to be able to continuously exert influence on Georgian developments could not be diffused even after Georgia's CIS membership. Georgia requested on several occasions that the CIS-Russian PKF in Abkhazia should be changed in its composition, but no real adequate changes could be achieved.

Georgia was trying to involve e.g. Ukraine more in Abkhazia, especially after the formation of GUUAM – originally a cooperation of CIS members having all (territorial) conflicts with Russia (Georgia – Abkhazia, South Ossetia; Ukraine – Crimea, Azerbaijan – Nagorni Karabakh, Moldova – Trans-Dniestr). As relations with Russia some times soured under president Shevardnadze, Georgia tried also to involve outer regional powers or to enhance relations with them, foremost with the USA, hoping that the US or eventually NATO – as in other parts of the world - will get involved in support of Georgian aims. Towards the end of Shevardnadze's reign however also relations with the US complicated and the US as well as NATO made it clear that no military involvement from their side would be expected.

So the Russian card was played again more vigorously than in the past. In the Abkhaz context the Sochi meeting of summer 2003 between Shevardnadze, Putin and the Abkhaz "Prime Minister" Gagulia can be considered to be the most important event. In Sochi - at least on paper – was agreed:

- step by step return of IDPs
- Restart of a train connection from Russia to Georgia
- Rehabilitation of hydro power plants on the Inguri river
- CIS/Russian PKF not to be extended every six months, but to be stationed on a continuous basis until one of the parties asks for changes

The international community was surprised by the outcome of the Sochi meetings, as they seemed to imply a second conflict resolution track next to the so far only UN mechanism, either trying to replace the latter one (although Russia is also part of it) or to circumvent it, showing the international community the inefficiency of the UN work and at the same time to impress by bilateral, Russian sponsored solution ideas. After Sochi Shevardnadze praised Russia as being the main guarantor for the post conflict arrangements.

In the context of Georgian - Russian relations one should also tackle the question of Russian bases in Georgia – out of the original four two which should have been according to the OSCE Istanbul commitments vacated already (Vaziani and Gudauta in Abkhazia), the

later one was described by Russia as having fulfilled the obligations like Vaziani, which the Georgian side is contesting. Problems with the closure of the two remaining bases can be at least partially explained by the Russian fear that other countries (NATO) would follow Russia with stationing.

Although the new Georgian government tried to reassure Russia that no foreign country would be allowed to have military stationing in the country, Russia could so far not be convinced of the Georgian sincerity. If neutrality is an option, remains to be seen, the more so as the Saakashvili government is pursuing a very strong NATO membership policy. The overall Georgian-Russian framework agreement, started under Shevardnadze, has so far shown no signs of being completed, although fall 2004 is very often cited as a possible date.

In this context one may need to analyse the role of some subjects of the Russian Federation and their role in the Abkhaz context. As mentioned above it was mainly Chechnya under Dudaev that was rather supportive of the Abkhaz agenda (due to ethnic reasons, but also trying at the same time to use the Abkhaz-Georgian example for herself in the relationship between Chechnya and the Russian central government). In the course of events things changed in so far that Georgia as a whole was seen more and more by Russia as supporting the Chechen case against the Russian central government by allegedly helping Chechens in their warfare against the Russian central authorities – a fact that led in 2002 to a Russian ultimatum of “invasion” into Georgia if the Georgian side would not declare herself ready to cooperate with Russia in the fight against Chechen terrorism. Also here the new Georgian government is ready to follow a more pragmatic approach towards Russia hoping that this will be rewarded with a more reconciliatory Russian policy towards Georgian territorial conflicts.

The US role, though increasing in Georgia with its “Train and Equip Programme”, was at times also seen as decreasing as corruption in Georgia was increasing and the good relations with Russia – needed for Afghanistan and Iraq purposes – were not to be strained with too much attention to Georgia. The situation changed to a certain extent after the Georgian Rose Revolution – US military support increased, the Georgian topic was more present on the US-Russian agenda, but still no military involvement of the US or NATO can be expected to solve the Abkhaz crisis (an eventual Georgian NATO membership as reward for their Iraq engagement would come too late taking into account the speed of president Saakashvili’s actions and the expected results from his side).

As President Saakashvili designated the territorial integrity of Georgia as one of the cornerstones of his policies, he is more determined than ever to show progress in conflict solution questions. After the solution of the Adjara crisis (see below) he envisaged as a next step the solution of South Ossetia, recognizing albeit that the Abkhaz problem was harder to solve and that it would take more time, but nevertheless putting forward – for the first time since long – new Georgian proposals how the future of Georgian – Abkhaz relations could look like. The main features being thus:

- Agreement on peaceful solution
- Agreement on power sharing to be changed only by mutual consent, disputes to be solved by constitutional court
- Status of Abkhazia as Parliamentary Republic within Georgia, led by a “president” if population so wishes, to be elected without ethnic discrimination, has to be fluent in Abkhaz and Georgian
- Majority of Parliamentarians to be ethnic Abkhaz, quota for Georgian IDPs after their return, immigration of persons having not lived in Abkhazia before the war to be only 1 to 2 per cent of the Abkhaz population
- Proportionally more Abkhaz in Abkhaz executive
- A certain number of Abkhaz seats reserved in central government, being able to object again anything concerning Abkhazia
- The central Georgian government is to have the only competences in foreign policy, defence, border guards, customs and fight against organized crime
- No own army for Abkhazia, but Abkhaz conscripts for military service only in Abkhazia
- Own Abkhaz police
- Abkhaz inhabitants, that lived in Abkhazia before the war entitled to double citizenship
- Georgian and Abkhaz, but Abkhazia no subject of international law
- No more economic sanctions against Abkhazia, restoration of air and train connections
- Own Abkhaz taxes and budget
- Currency to be Georgian Lari with Abkhaz symbols and Abkhaz and Georgian inscriptions, to be recognized also in other parts of Georgia, own Abkhaz Central Bank

The above proposal was meant to see Abkhazia within Georgia but with more rights than before the war, a kind of federation with confederative elements, in other words, an asymmetric federation. In addition to these detailed suggestions from the Georgian side, president Saakashvili also changed the leadership of the “Abkhaz in Exile” (Georgian IDPs from Abkhazia, the leadership of which was since 1993 represented in the Georgian Parliament without ever having to undergo elections and which was lately very much criticized by the IDP community itself due to illegitimate behaviour and corruption).

So far the Abkhaz reaction was nevertheless not a positive one, asking for official distances from the then military Georgian implications and the disbanding of IDP guerrilla formations that every now and then made incursions into Abkhazia.

Having analysed the Russian/CIS and US factors as well as the OSCE and UN in the Abkhaz case it is nevertheless also interesting to see reaction of other players concerning Abkhazia and to scrutinize

changes in their attitudes towards the OSCE and the UN. When at the beginning Georgia was of course more than satisfied that the OSCE and the UN got involved in their different territorial problems thus making halt to a continuation of the conflict and insisting – according to international law and OSCE principles – on the territorial integrity of Georgia, a certain change in attitude has been perceptible. As the OSCE seemed to be more successful concerning South Ossetia, a stronger OSCE involvement was also sought for in Abkhazia.

The latest moves from the Saakashvili government show a certain determination by Georgia, also to be seen in other cases, to do things more on their own, if the international community seems to be too slow to respond adequately to Georgian views – relying also on the fact that Georgia is stronger (internally and externally) than it has been before the Rose Revolution. Whereas on the other hand, Abkhazia became more and more frustrated with the UN role as apparently the UN was seen as not taking Abkhaz considerations enough into consideration. Interruptions of Abkhaz participation in the Geneva process are direct expressions of these fears – which mean that both sides seem to be more and more reluctant in following the solution models prepared by international organisations.

Besides the international organisations one should also pay attention to some other countries/players concerning Abkhazia. Turkey e.g. is on the one hand side a very close ally of Georgia – also to be seen in her antagonism with Armenia – that also represented at times the NATO interests in Georgia, expressed through strong military cooperation ties, but always had very good relations with Abkhazia (Moslem population) as well. The obvious circumvention by Turkey of the economic blockade of Abkhazia by Turkish ships bringing fuel, food, etc. to Abkhazia was known by Georgia and not intervened against – which testifies of the strong Turkish position in the region and especially Georgia (see below).

Possible other international players like Iran, Armenia, the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, etc. do not play a significant role in solving the Abkhaz conflict. Armenia however is due to its economic blockade and the high percentage of Armenians living in Abkhazia very interested in a solution of the conflict that would also enable her to take advantage of a re-established rail connection between Armenia and Russia going through Abkhazia.

In the framework of the “Group of Friends of the United Nations Secretary General”, Great Britain, which also recently appointed an “Ambassador at large” for Georgia/the Southern Caucasus with emphasis on the conflict solution seems to show the most interest in the situation. At times EU efforts to get more involved in the peace making process through e.g. EU participation in the conflict mechanisms, was regarded unfavourably by Great Britain, eventually fearing competition from the EU as an organisation.

As most of the overall aspects have already been dealt within the chapter on Abkhazia, only basic facts remain for the two other conflicts in Adjara and South Ossetia.

## Adjara

In the framework of the conquest of southeast Georgia by the Ottomans, the Christian populations became Islamized. In the 19th century Tsarist Russia conquered the place to be partially reoccupied by Turkey in 1921 due to the Kars treaty. The part of this region that stayed with Georgia/the Soviet Union was transformed in 1922 into the Autonomous Republic of Adjara within the Union Republic of Georgia. The main parts of today's Adjara have been governed until recently for centuries by the Abashidze family.

The conflict between Adjara and the central Georgian government never took a military turn as in the case with Abkhazia or South-Ossetia, though the Autonomous Republic was governed more or less independently from Tbilisi. Expression of this independence was mainly the fact that no contributions from custom intakes at the Georgian/Adjara-Turkish border or the interior Georgian-Adjara border were channelled to the Georgian central budget. "President" Abashidze who ruled the Autonomous Republic as his own private, feudal fiefdom and who sometimes was seeing himself as an eventual successor to Shevardnadze was also a very close friend with Russia hosting one of the originally four Russian bases in Georgia and the Georgian/Adjara border being guarded by Russia. He never went to Tbilisi out of fear being murdered, though his political party, the Renaissance Party, was for quite some time the second strongest party in the Georgian Parliament. In the wake of the Rose Revolution it was Abashidze, as a turn of history, who supported Shevardnadze the most and who tried to act as a kind of mediator between Shevardnadze, Russia and other regional players.

But Abashidze could not survive the second Rose Revolution due to a hitherto very rare coinciding Georgian-Russian move that ended with the ouster of Abashidze who since then lives in Russia untouched by Georgia. So far it is unclear what the exact barter trade between Georgia and Russia has been in the Adjara case: longer stationing, neutrality, no foreign basis, closer cooperation in the fight against (Chechen) terrorism? The parliamentary elections in Adjara brought an overwhelming victory for Saakashvili and on June 25, 2004 a new statute for Adjara:

- Own flag and coat of arms, though smaller than the Georgian one
- Own constitution
- Georgian President has the right to dissolve the Adjara Supreme Council, to dismiss the governor of Adjara and to annul laws adopted by the Supreme Council of Adjara
- Own ministries for economy, finance, tourism, health, social affairs, education, culture, sport, agriculture, but not interior, state security, defence

As the Adjara conflict was the least violent, it was also the first to be solved by the new Georgian government. Beside the role of Russia, it is also noteworthy that the US and Turkey were involved as mediators as

was in this case the Council of Europe and the EU through her newly appointed Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus. The US, having been in one way or another instrumental in bringing about the Rose Revolution felt of course obliged also to contribute to a peaceful change.

The Autonomous Republic of Adjara was also a member of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional authorities the council of Europe, having its own representative in Georgia, also tried to act as a mediator, calling for a peaceful solution of the crisis and the respect of human rights and democratic principles by all sides – an endeavour that was judged by President Saakashvili as being too one sided, not enough critical of the Adjarian side and led to lengthy and furious allegations against the Council of Europe Secretary General, Schwimmer.

The Council of Europe however continued its policy of highlighting short comings in the democratic development of any member of the Council of Europe and even after the elections in Adjara issued a statement describing the new autonomy of Adjara not as a real autonomy as too many things are still decided by Georgian central authorities.

In the Adjarian context Turkey has to be mentioned. Like Russia, an heir to the Soviet Union, so Turkey, an heir to the Ottoman Empire, has certain guarantee functions over Adjara contained in the Kars Treaty. Abashidze was also very successful in having the best of relations with the traditional rivals in the Southern Caucasus, Russia/Soviet Union and Turkey/Ottoman Empire. Turkey is also the only country that has a General Consulate in Batumi, the Adjara capital. Both, Russia as well as Turkey, were referring to their guarantee rights during the Adjara crisis without however to explain their details and having been obliged to use any of them.

As mentioned above, shortly before the Rose Revolution the EU appointed the Finnish diplomat Talvitie as its Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus. In this function he met Mr. Abashidze several times and acted as mediator from the EU side which, like the OSCE, appealed to both conflicting parties to look for a peaceful solution.

## **South Ossetia**

The Ossetians are said to be descendents of the Iranian Scythians and settled in the 6th century in Ossetia then populated by the Turkic Khazars. Already then they controlled the only land connection between the southern and northern ranges of the Caucasus. In the 17th century many Ossetians were invited by the Georgian nobility to come to Georgia to develop agriculture. The Ossetians that henceforth lived in Georgia were Christianised; the ones staying on the northern side of the Caucasus became Islamized through the Karbadinians.

Towards the end of the 18th century North Ossetia has been conquered by Russia. The Georgian-Russian friendship treaty of 1783 foresaw the inclusion of South Ossetia into Georgia. In 1829 the “Georgian Military Road” from Vladikavkaz (the capital of North

Ossetia) to Tbilisi was built. In 1920 North Ossetia (together with Ingushetia) became an Autonomous Region of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic, South Ossetia an Autonomous Region of Georgia. Moves for unification of both Ossetian parts have been denied during Soviet Union's time from Russian as well as Georgian side.

During the more liberal times nearing the end of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, however South Ossetia declared her independence in November 1991. A referendum in January 1992 showed more than 90 per cent of the Ossetian population being for unification with Russia. This step led to military confrontation between South Ossetia and the Georgian central government, which abolished the status of autonomy for South Ossetia, naming it henceforth "Tskhinvali region". In the wake of this confrontation a common PKF composed of Russia, Georgia, North and South Ossetia has been established.

Since 1992 the OSCE mainly through its mission in Tbilisi and Tskhinvali (opened in 1997) is tasked to find a lasting conflict solution and to monitor the activities of the PKF. In 1994 so called "contact talks" between Georgia and South Ossetia started and a cease-fire agreement was signed that also implied the creation of a Joint Control Commission (including the OSCE and UNHCR). Sub groups of this Commission deal with questions relating to military, economic and IDPs problems. An overview of the complex conflict settlement machinery is attached – to which one had still to add the Sochi agreements.

It was always stated that the South Ossetian conflict seems to be much easier solved than the Abkhaz case. It might seem logical, but one always has to ask if South Ossetia will finally be satisfied with a lower degree of autonomy/status than e.g. Abkhazia – and accept such a status before the Abkhaz question is solved.

The Georgian and Adjara Rose Revolutions, judged rather negatively by Abkhazia and South Ossetia brought also new momentum to the South Ossetian conflict, as President Saakashvili seems to have chosen South Ossetia as the next territorial Georgian conflict to be solved according to his policy visions.

As in the case of the two Rose Revolutions Saakashvili tried at the outset to use "soft", i.e. social, humanitarian (free medical care, Georgian pensions for Ossetians, etc.), personal means to bring change about in South Ossetia. As this maybe moved too slowly and his second political credo after territorial integrity was fight against corruption he moved – against Control Commissions' and OSCE commitments - under the (correct) pretext of putting an end to the smuggle economy of South Ossetia, forces of the Georgian central government into the conflict zone, accusing at the same time also Russia to deliver military equipment to South Ossetia beyond the needs of the PKF.

June and July 2004 saw therefore heightened tensions in South Ossetia with almost all parties involved in one way or the other disregarding Control Commissions' and OSCE regulations and military threats from Georgia proper as well as from South Ossetia. Russia's position seemed to be ambivalent, depending on who from the Russian leadership/decision making circles interpreted the events.

On July 14/15 2004 a meeting of the Joint Control Commission that had been postponed for several times took place in Moscow, where the following was decided:

- to take measures to prevent any use of force
- to take measures for ensuring free delivery of humanitarian aid
- to put the Joint Control Commission on a permanent working regime in Tshkinvali until normalisation
- to call for the mass media to abstain distributing inaccurate information

But the situation nevertheless did not calm down; with Georgia not evacuating their forces from the zone of conflict, South Ossetia undertaking military exercises and Russian representatives making provocative statements.

The solution of the South Ossetian conflict was to be dealt with primarily by the OSCE, an extraordinary OSCE Permanent Council meeting was held in Vienna that saw heavy Georgian – Russian accusations, blaming each side from its point of view the OSCE for either inactivity or biased approaches.

While the OSCE after the outbreak of the conflict was seen by Georgia as helping her to regain South Ossetia and after a certain time also seen by South Ossetia as a respected partner, things changed with the new Georgian government, the one side (Georgia) - while still respecting OSCE's engagement in the matter – having recourse to methods not foreseen by any of the agreements concerning the conflict solution, tried to make things happen quicker in its favour than methods by international organisations, the other side blaming the OSCE more than in the past for its one sided approaches of the matter. The Council of Europe and the EU also called on both sides to restrain from any use of force and to respect previous agreements in the conflict solution process.

As mentioned above NATO has also increased its attention towards the Southern Caucasus. Besides individual membership interests all three countries have PfP-programmes and two are interested in concluding an Individual Partnership Program with NATO. In the PfP framework one also tries to bring the conflicting parties together through the organisation of conferences, etc. – as do other international actors, also on the NGO level, e.g. *Conciliation Resources* for the above mentioned Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue.

## **Conclusions**

We can now address the EU's role concerning the Southern Caucasus/Georgia, in general. All three South Caucasian countries have concluded Partnership and Cooperation agreements with the EU, which for quite some time has been the most important single donor to the region (especially Georgia), that foresee meetings of all three countries with EU representatives on ministerial sometimes presidential level in irregular intervals and so called visits in EU troika format to the region.

In such meetings conflict solution matters always figure as one of the topics to be discussed. The Georgian Rose Revolution also brought about the inclusion of the Southern Caucasus into the EU's "New European Neighbourhood Policy" – an instrument that could eventually use also levers/incentives for conflict solutions.

But as in the Adjara and Abkhaz case it seems that exclusive relying of the conflicting parties on conflict solution mechanisms of international organisations seem to become less important if one party to the conflict seems itself in a stronger position than before, thinking to be better able to solve the conflict "alone" or when the impression by at least one of the conflicting parties of an biased approach of the international community seems to prevail.

To sum up: What is the sense of conflict solution mechanisms by international organisations and how successful have they been in the Southern Caucasus? So far their success lies in the fact that any stronger military conflict could be halted – as it was sometimes described, the conflicts have been frozen. But can one characterize these efforts successful if after twelve years no permanent solution is in sight? Or are the conflicting parties themselves often not interested in a permanent solution fearing that they have to compromise too much and would be seen by their population/electorate as too compromising whereas the status quo either gives them the possibility to live their "independence" (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) or to put other negative domestic developments in direct relationship with the unresolved conflicts as a kind of (permanent) excuse? Or will parties rekindle the conflicts and try to solve them themselves in order to turn away attention from other, domestic, problems?

A certain part of truth lies in all these aspects: the international conflict solution machinery is sometimes too slow as it has to respect many facets and no one to-day seems able and (understandingly) willing to put all its efforts into the solution of just one conflict (besides so many others in the world). But on the other hand side conflicting parties have to understand that they finally have to compromise and that a conflict never erupts exclusively because of the fault of just one side. Do we have to change the international conflict solution mechanisms – we only can do this by consensus and perhaps this will be difficult to reach; the one who needs the help the most to-day might tomorrow already be in a position in which it prefers to have a freer hand. If there is no real sense of compromise on both sides of the conflict, it will be difficult to find solutions. Economic carrots could some times have effects – this could be maybe sought of more in depth by the EU who already in the past also contributed to rebuild conflict zones, e.g. in South Ossetia.