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THE EU IN GEORGIA: BUILDING SECURITY?

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The EU in Georgia: Building Security?¹

Abstract: This article addresses the European Union (EU)'s security actorness, explaining its meaning, identifying the factors that are constitutive to the concept, and analysing whether the EU is becoming a mature security provider in Georgia. The paper argues that despite the successful assessments of the EU Monitoring Mission in the context of CSDP development, the mission's main contribution to the EU's consolidation as a mature security actor and of a new regional status quo in the South Caucasus is centred on the complementary and comprehensive nature of the different EU tools deployed on the ground, in line with what we see as the 'coming of age' of the EU as a mature security actor.

Keywords: EU – European Union, Georgia, EUMM – European Union Monitoring Mission, CSDP – Common Security and Defence Policy, security actorness, security provider.

Introduction

The European Union (EU) has been taking on security functions in a growing number of issue areas and geographical scenarios, making the understanding of this security actor more relevant. Since its inception, the EU's security actorness has been very present in its goal of building a community of peace, though more visible after the end of the Cold War and the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. These developments contributed to a deeper focus on security-related matters, and to the institutional consolidation of a set of mechanisms and procedures to address the many challenges the Union faces in its enlarged neighbourhood.

The literature addressing the EU as a security actor has been reflecting these evolving dynamics with two major approaches that are of relevance for this study. The first developed around the idea of European integration as a peace project based on functionalist approaches to political relations (Mitrany, 1966; Haas, 1964). Through this process, a security community developed, within which states shared security concerns and mutual expectations of peaceful change (Deutsch *et al.*, 1957). The European Communities fitted this image and, as Wæver (1998) argued, formed a non-war community, where issues were asecuritised. Institutional integration, and economic

¹ This text was presented at the ISA Annual Convention in San Diego, in 2012, and builds on extensive field research by the authors in Georgia, in 2011.

interdependence and prosperity, have been two major processes underlying the pursuit of peace and stability in Europe.

The second approach developed alongside the deepening of the process of integration on foreign and security issues at the European level (Hyde-Price, 2004; Kaldor *et al.*, 2007; Menon, 2009; Bono, 2004). The institutionalisation of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) with the Single European Act (1986), and its consolidation in Maastricht (1992) as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), enlarged the debate on European security and the role of the EU in this context. The civilian actor (Duchene, 1972) was increasingly faced with hard security challenges in its periphery, namely the conflicting dynamics in the Balkans, which accelerated the debates on EU military capabilities as a necessary complement to the existing soft policy tools for security provision (Howorth, 2003). The understanding was that integration in defence matters and developing military capabilities would complement the main existing instruments for security provision, such as structural reforms through association agreements and deeper integration processes in economic and political terms. This context led to the incorporation of soft and hard security logics in the EU's actorness, central to its approach to regional and global dynamics (Wæver, 2000; Manners, 2006).

The understanding of security underlying this analysis combines both military aspects and civilian and normative dimensions, and reflects the very nature of the development of security policy inside the EU (Bretherton and Vogler, 2007). In this sense, the argument that the EU is a security actor on its own follows the reasoning developed, among others, by Hintermeier (2008) and Zwolski (2009) that only considering the historical process of the EU's approach to security can we avoid the trap of assessing EU security actorness from the view point of its military capabilities alone. In fact, as this article demonstrates, the deployment of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia should be assessed in the framework of the EU's engagement in its neighbourhood, and the different security tools and mechanisms being deployed to promote stabilisation through democratic reforms, regional cooperation, economic development and, since 2008, also through conflict resolution and peacebuilding tools.

The EUMM is a civilian mission, focusing mainly on monitoring activities, as part of the EU's security provider role in the region, as further analysed in the text. In this way, the article conceptually addresses the EU's security actorness, explaining its meaning, identifying the factors that are constitutive to the concept and those absent

from it, and analysing whether the EU is becoming a mature security provider in Georgia, through its increased presence and engagement in the country and its eventual implications for the South Caucasus.

Departing from an understanding of the EU as a security actor, and security provider, the article focuses on the presence of the EU in Georgia through the deployment of a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)² mission, in order to assess whether the EU can be considered a mature security provider in Georgia and what the contribution of the EUMM has been to this process. The text argues that despite the successful assessments of the EUMM in the context of CSDP development, the mission's deployment and its contribution to regional stability owe to a large extent to contextual factors. However, an analysis of the mission's contribution to the EU's consolidation as a mature security actor and of a new regional *status quo* in the South Caucasus highlights the complementary nature of the different EU tools deployed on the ground and its comprehensive nature, in line with what we see as the 'coming of age' of the EU as a mature security actor, as well as important hurdles and limitations still impacting the process. Building on extensive field research, the article uses first-hand information and refers to the main literature on the EU's security actorness to place the EUMM in the broader development of the EU as a security actor as well as the meaning of this EU mission to regional security dynamics in Georgia and in the Caucasus more widely.

The Security Actorness of the EU

The EU's security actorness has mainly been built on soft security mechanisms, such as enlargement, stabilisation and neighbourhood policies, its normative *acquis*, and more recently, the deployment of CSDP missions (which have been largely civilian missions).³ The deepening and widening of the security agenda after the end of the Cold War, to areas not fitting the most conservative understandings of hard security, allowed the EU to develop and consolidate its role as a security actor in a non-traditional way. The EU's *sui generis* nature has challenged traditional conceptualisations of security (Bretherton and Vogler, 2007) based on realist assumptions about military power, with

² After the Lisbon Treaty, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has been named Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

³ According to the External Action Service, the EU has deployed this far 19 civilian missions (of which seven are completed), seven military missions (of which four are completed), and one civ-mil mission already completed. More specific information available at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/eeas/security-defence/eu-operations?lang=en>. Accessed 20 October 2012.

the EU using non-security instruments to address security issues (Brandão, 2013). In fact, being a security actor does not imply being militarised.

Additionally, the EU conceptualised security in innovative ways, bringing together the deepening of integration, which led to the establishment of a security community and the development of tools to act outside its borders. The European Security Strategy (Council of the European Union, 2003), as well as the Report on its Implementation (Council of the European Union, 2008h), clearly identify these two dimensions, acknowledging the fundamental contribution of the EU to regional peace and stability in Europe and the challenges that its success poses to its nature as a global actor, with increasingly global responsibilities. This reasoning implies a deep and comprehensive approach to stabilisation processes, promoting democratic reforms and economic growth, in line with the security-building mechanisms agreed among the member states, but also further involvement in hard security issues, where the deployment of CSDP missions and the involvement of the EU in crisis management in its neighbourhood but also globally is central.

As a security actor, the EU faces endogenous and external constraints. The multi-level decision-making process of a collective of 27 member states and different intergovernmental and supranational institutions constrains the finding of common ground for decision shaping, making and implementation (Smith, 2004; Sjørnsen, 2012). Also, EU institutions do not share the same understandings about security issues (Brandão, 2013), rendering inter-institutional cooperation sometimes cumbersome. The institutional design, the allocation of resources and the political will to act are, thus, major aspects constraining or potentiating EU action. This poses important challenges to the promotion of peace and stability outside the EU's borders, to where the security community is only reluctantly being extended (Simão, 2010). Hard security challenges, such as the South Caucasus' protracted conflicts and increased militarisation efforts by these governments, require adequate security tools from the EU, to be able to respond to the security risks associated to these developments, both at the EU and the regional levels.

The development of military capabilities, even if limited, alongside the deployment of civilian CSDP missions from 2003, rendered more coherence to this actor, since the most traditionalist understandings of security were somehow accounted for (Smith, 2000). However, it should be highlighted that these new instruments sought to reinforce the normative and civilian dimensions of the EU's security actorness

(Stavridis, 2001: 9). This is pursued through the fostering of democratisation processes and the consolidation of peaceful paths towards development, complemented by the deployment of rule of law, police training and border monitoring missions. Reflecting the self-image of the EU as mainly a civilian actor, the mixed nature of CSDP missions, combining civilian and military aspects and performing activities of prevention, assurance, protection and compulsion (Kirschner and Sperling, 2007), contributed decisively to make the EU a more complete and coherent security actor. It is in this comprehensive approach of EU action as a security actor that lie its strengths.

After the 2004 enlargement, the consolidation of a region of peace and stability at the EU borders became a fundamental security goal, prompting a more proactive approach from the EU based on principles of legitimacy, and geographical and cultural proximity, which became explicit in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and later on the Eastern Partnership (EaP) (Gänzle, 2007; Christou, 2010). In this sense, the EU has been consolidating its role as a regional security actor, with its neighbouring areas becoming a priority in its foreign policy agenda, though revealing limited capabilities to project security globally (Larsen, 2002). The relation with other security actors, in particular the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the United States, but especially the Russian Federation, is of relevance here (DeBardeleben, 2008; Gower and Timmins, 2010). Additionally, the interplays that result from EU member states' distinct memberships in international organisations and how these intertwine with regard to their commitment to regional peace and stability are central to the performance of the EU. In this same line, the differentiated relations of EU member states with Russia and the weakness of the EU-Russia strategic partnership also contribute to the limits the EU faces, reinforcing the idea that the context is a fundamental element for understanding the EU's possibilities as a security actor.

EU's external relations are a fundamental element in the definition of the Union's international actorness, both in terms of how the EU designs its goals and actions beyond its borders and of how it is perceived by its partners, especially in the neighbourhood. This means that the EU's political will and operational capacity to act as a force for peace and stability are relevant not only to the effective management of the crises and conflicts in its neighbourhood, but also to the ability of the EU to be recognised as a legitimate security actor. The EU has been acting mainly through the promotion of cohesive governance structures (Lavenex, 2004) and approaches rooted on shared norms and principles, with important significance for regional security (Smith,

2005; Browning and Joenniemi, 2008; Tonra, 2010). Coherence between the rhetorical promotion of these norms and the effective translation of these into political action is the second element in this equation, calling for the careful management of expectations and the sustainable taking on of new commitments.

However, this has proved hard as the perceived normative imposition of EU standards and values have contributed to discontent in its vicinity regarding its normative credentials (Haukkala, 2011). A process that has been criticised for assuming co-ownership and co-responsibility between the EU and its partners (Korosteleva, 2012), but which has mainly been driven by the EU, such as the drafting of the Action Plans with the three South Caucasus republics demonstrated (Simão and Freire, 2008). Moreover, at a time of economic and financial crisis, the lack of funding is an added concern, only reinforced by the EU's self-imposed limitations regarding future enlargements and the lack of strategic clarity and capabilities, which the multi-level governance structure reinforces. This integrated whole, which is more than the sum of its parts, renders the security actorness a dynamic reality, as will be analysed in the case of EUMM in Georgia.

EU in Georgia: A Security Provider?

For most of the 1990s, Georgia-EU relations remained underdeveloped and marginal to both actors' agendas. For the EU, Georgia was a distant country, dealing with secessionism in the self-proclaimed republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and deeply influenced by Russia. For the Georgian leaders, the EU presented possibilities for cooperation, essentially at the economic level, but overall the United States and NATO represented much more interesting (and reliable) security cooperation and investment partnerships (Shaffer, 2003; Nitkin, 2007). These gradual changes implied that each South Caucasus state perceived its security differently. As Svante Cornell (2004: 126) argues, 'international interest in the region tended to increase polarisation of regional politics'. The rivalry between the United States and Russia is here a good example, clearly endowing the foreign policy decisions of regional leaders with strategic calculations about their security (Simão and Freire, 2008: 231).

This initial reluctant EU engagement was dictated by a set of endogenous and exogenous factors. At the EU level, the underdeveloped and mainly intergovernmental nature of the Union's foreign policy tools provided EU member states with added (if limited) responsibilities for defining new priorities for external action and for

developing these processes. Eurasian problems remained largely absent from the EU agenda, reflecting both the inability of the member states to design a common strategy to address instability in the region, and their preference for a Russia-first approach, mainly concerned with nuclear proliferation in the former-Soviet area (Wyllie, 1997: 73; Allen, 1997). The definition of a regional security role for the EU in Eurasia was gradually put on the European political agenda during preparations for the 2004 enlargement (Lynch, 2003: 183-186; Webber *et al.*, 2004: 18-19). The inclusion of the southern Caucasus countries in the ENP in 2004, and the upgrade in relations which it implied, is explained by the windows of opportunity created by the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the shift in security alignments particularly after 9/11 in the United States, and the challenges to Russia's influence in this preferential area (see Lynch, 2003).

The extent to which EU engagement focused on security and whether the EU was positioning itself as a security provider for Georgia is here fundamental. At the political level, the ENP was framed as a security policy of the EU, safeguarding the European security community by promoting security beyond EU borders. This would be pursued through proactive engagement, contributing to the formation of a 'ring of friends' at the borders of the Union (European Commission, 2003), and to the projection of stability according to EU principles and procedures. Thus, the security mechanisms put in place by the EU in the framework of the ENP and the EaP, and its deeper involvement in the South Caucasus, have a security purpose from Brussels' perspective. However, they did not fully respond to the national security priorities set by the Georgian government. Under the ENP, the EU focused on democratisation and economic reforms (through bilateral ENP Action Plans), but this was not accompanied by increased engagement and proactive support for the resolution of the protracted conflicts and other regional sources of instability. This raised concerns among Georgian authorities, about the EU's commitment for changing what they viewed as an unfavourable and unrecognised *status quo*, both prior to and after the 2008 war.

According to Coppieters (2007), the EU and Georgia displayed a fundamental mismatching in their 'time perspectives', regarding their approach to the conflicts. For President Saakashvili that was the first priority in Georgia's international agenda, actively promoting a change in mediation formats that would reduce Russia's control of the process and ideally draw Russia back from its 'peacekeeping' functions under the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) flag. This was a precondition for all other

reforms. Although European integration is underlined as a central objective in the Georgian National Security Concept of July 2005, adopted after the Rose Revolution, stating ‘Georgia[’s] return to its European tradition and [that it would] remain an integral part of Europe’, it also underlined independence and ensuring territorial integrity as the most important priorities of the country (Government of Georgia, 2005). President Saakashvili’s main internal concern focused on the reintegration of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and his foreign policy priority was NATO membership, reflecting a clear prioritisation of hard security issues.

After the 2008 war with Russia, the new National Security Concept of Georgia, adopted in December 2011, underlines economic development as a central factor to Georgia’s ‘stable and secure development’, and as an important contribution to the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, adding that the withdrawal of Russian forces from its territory should be followed by an enhanced presence of the EU, ‘extending the EUMM’s monitoring activity into the occupied territories’ and advancing with the deployment of peacekeeping forces (not explicit if EU forces) (Government of Georgia, 2012: 11-12). This approach seems to reflect a greater level of accommodation with the EU’s vision of regional peace and stability, since there is ‘the recognition that security is not only about military and diplomatic affairs but also about the wider context of economic development and interdependence, energy vulnerability, and modes of domestic governance’ (MacFarlane, 2012: 2). The Concept reflects a broadening in the understanding about security in Georgia in a post-2008 context, which converges with the EU security approach as well as further EU involvement in crisis management in the country.

Though the EU displayed a clear willingness to actively engage in and support the transformation of the South Caucasus, at the level of conflict resolution it has been more conservative, reluctantly taking on new security functions and rarely seeking them proactively. The EU did respond to the demands from the ground with practical mechanisms, but failed to devise a long-term strategy for its engagement with the South Caucasus (Boonstra and Melvin, 2011). Russia remained the most divisive element among EU member states in this regard, especially concerning Georgia. A central concern of the EU was not to antagonise Moscow by supporting a radical change in the *status quo*, as advocated by the Saakashvili administration in Tbilisi, but rather to provide support for the existing conflict resolution mechanisms in Georgia, under the aegis of the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE). Nevertheless, the EU developed substantial efforts towards rehabilitation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, becoming the largest financial donor after Russia (Wilson and Popescu, 2009: 326), mainly towards confidence-building and democratic-oriented projects.

However, the projects remained largely de-politicised, as a way to assuage Russia and more reluctant EU member states, with the Commission deliberately presenting them as apolitical (Huff, 2011; Popescu, 2011). Starting from this low profile engagement promoted by EU institutions, the EU gradually took on new functions. The European Commission became an observer to the Joint Control Commission (JCC) meetings, dealing with the conflict over South Ossetia, and, under the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus, a Border Support Team (BST) was deployed⁴ with the mandate to train Georgian border guards. Conflict resolution proved to be an area of peaceful coexistence, even if not of cooperation, between the EU and Russia, as long as the EU acknowledged Russia's leading role in defining the scope of engagement (Simão, 2012).

In fact, following a Commission and Council fact-finding mission to South Ossetia and Abkhazia in January 2007 (Council of the European Union, 2008c), the report presented to the Political and Security Council (PSC) suggested additional measures the EU could take (Rettman, 2007). EU member states' reaction to the proposal was to strip it of any controversial issues regarding relations with Russia. This concern with Russia's reactions is also illustrated by the fact that the then EUSR for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby⁵ travelled to Moscow, and consulted with the Russian ambassador in Brussels, before submitting the document to the PSC (Popescu, 2011: 82).

The escalation into an open-armed conflict between Russia and Georgia, in August 2008 marked an important turning point in regional security understandings, exposing the limitations of the Georgian strategy and opening a new window of opportunity for the EU to engage further in the area as a security provider. This understanding underlines the importance of contextual factors in providing the EU with new engagement opportunities, but also seems to suggest that, alongside the new political will that developed among EU member states, the pre-existing activities led by EU institutions on the ground were fundamental to make the new CSDP mission more

⁴The EU Border Support Team was closed down on 28 February 2011.

⁵Refer to Council of the European Union 2008b.

effective. Since the Bucharest NATO summit, in April 2008, when Georgia and Ukraine were denied full membership perspectives, European leaders and officers with the OSCE and NATO, to which Georgia had appealed for mediation, were largely unable and unwilling to translate this appeal into preventive political action (Asmus, 2010: 141-146). Another fundamental aspect of the escalation leading up to the conflict, which is relevant to the role of the EUMM in the post-conflict context, is the building up of Russian military positions in the separatist territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Popjanevski, 2009: 143-150), which were understood in Georgia as signal of an eminent Russian invasion, and which later became a point of contention regarding who ignited violence and the monitoring of the cease-fire agreement, for which the EUMM was responsible. The lack of support from NATO and the United States led the Georgian authorities to ask for EU mediation.

The diplomatic process leading up to the cease-fire was conducted by the French diplomacy, in charge of the EU presidency during the second semester of 2008 and close coordination with the OSCE. The then French President Nicolas Sarkozy personally engaged in the mediation process and travelled to Moscow and Tbilisi to assure a quick end to the hostilities and a cease-fire agreement, which could be a sustainable basis for future peace talks (Council of the European Union, 2008f; van Rie, 2009: 322; Tumanov *et al.*, 2011: 127). The six-point plan, which was agreed on 8 September 2008 determined the non-use of force, the cessation of hostilities, granting access to humanitarian aid, the return of Georgian forces to their barracks, the withdrawal of Russian forces to positions held prior to the outbreak of hostilities in South Ossetia, and that Russian peacekeepers would take additional security measures until an international monitoring mechanism would be in place and in no case should that be extended to Georgia proper.⁶

Additionally, it was agreed to launch international discussions on security and stability arrangements for Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Although the cease-fire was observed and became the basis for future negotiations, it was fraught with challenges, including its vague language, open to differing interpretations, the pace and incomplete Russian withdrawal from Georgian territories, and lack of security in the buffer zones

⁶ The six-point cease-fire agreement can be accessed at <http://reliefweb.int/node/276556> (accessed 23 March 2012).

around the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL)⁷ (Grono, 2010: 12). Despite Javier Solana's, the then High Representative for the CFSP, positive remarks that 'EUMM patrols have confirmed that Russian armed forces have completed their planned withdrawal from the areas adjacent to Abkhazia and South Ossetia' (Council of the European Union, 2008g), Russian troops remain in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, not fully complying with the six-point agreement.

Building on the proposals of the cease-fire agreement, the EU's leading role in the peace-process was confirmed and its role as a security provider to Georgia was consolidated. Responding to this new context, the EU reinforced its stabilisation approaches by establishing the EaP in 2009, which offered the possibility for closer political relations between the EU and the six post-Soviet republics included in the ENP, by replacing the PCAs with new Association Agreements. It also offered new possibilities in terms of economic integration into the EU's common market, through the establishment of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas, among other important changes, namely on visa facilitation procedures (Council of the European Union, 2009a). These measures complemented the new political role the EU assumed after the war, responding to the needs from the ground and assuming a leading regional security role, now complemented by the EUMM in Georgia and the EU's central role in the mediation process.

Through cooperation with the OSCE, a platform for negotiations was created, the Geneva Talks, involving the EU, the OSCE, the UN and the United States, as well as the conflict parties, Georgia and Russia (the first round of negotiations took place on 14 October 2008) (OSCE Press Release, 2008). Abkhazia and South Ossetia were also included in this framework at Russian request; a position also favoured by the EU and the OSCE and to which Georgia reluctantly agreed (Mikhelidze, 2010: 10). The EU was thus directly involved and fully engaged in conflict management in the South Caucasus, for the first time since the ENP was established. In fact, the war was the only event that led the EU to accept a conflict resolution role, as Georgia had actively requested. Moreover, it should be noted that Russia's pressure for the opening of a new OSCE office in Tskhinvali, in South Ossetia, further added to the complexity of the situation, since it would mean recognition of the *status quo* (van Rie, 2009: 318), an aspect the EU has also been very cautious about. The OSCE and the UN missions' mandates were

⁷ The ABL are the border lines separating Georgia's regions and in the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia constitute Georgia's de facto international borders.

not renewed, due to Russia's opposition, making the EU the only international presence in the field (Sinkkonen, 2011: 265; Whitman and Wolff, 2010: 88). This implied on the one hand a greater responsibility for the EU as a conflict manager and security provider in the region, whereas on the other hand it opened a window of opportunity for testing its capacities to perform such security tasks and thus be acknowledged as a security provider in Georgia.

The EUMM, with which we deal in more detail below, serves as the main EU mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the post-conflict situation. Besides its functions on the ground, the mission is also a fundamental element in the broader EU security strategy and presence in Georgia and in the South Caucasus. The mission Head coordinates closely with the PSC and the High Representative, as well as with other EU actors on the ground, looking to streamline EU strategies and enhance synergies at the institutional level. The importance of coordination is even more important as the EU has a multitude of instruments deployed in Georgia,⁸ including besides the EUMM, the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, Philippe Lefort (since September 2011), the EU Delegation in Tbilisi and the instruments active in the framework of the ENP, the EaP as well as the Instrument for Stability.

The combined instruments in the field seem to fit the EU's new security functions and thus to respond to Georgia's needs reinforcing the EU's role as a security provider. However, and despite the enhanced security role of the EU, the EUMM's restricted mandate and EU's reluctance to antagonise Russia have contributed to regional stabilisation, but offering limited possibilities for conflict resolution, issues that are further developed in the next section.

EUMM: A Test Case for the EU's Role as a Security Actor

Setting up the Mission

The EUMM in Georgia was established on 15 September 2008 (Council of the European Union, 2008a), following a EU exploratory mission on 2 September, after the Six-Point Agreement was concluded on 8 August, and the Supplementary Agreement to its implementation on 8 September. The decision followed the Georgian government's request of 11 September 2008 for the EU to deploy a monitoring mission to Georgia (Council of the European Union, 2008a). According to the Council decision, the

⁸ Interview with EUSR Political Advisor, Brussels, 18 January 2011.

EUMM Georgia was to be deployed in a short time-frame based on two phases: the first one, regarding deployment of human and material resources starting that September, and then the operational phase initiating ‘no later than 1 October 2008’ (*ibidem*: article 1). This rapid response to the needs on the ground was a fundamental step towards increasing the visibility of EU action locally. The quick management of the institutional decision-making process within the EU suggests a fundamental change in the EU’s understanding of the urgency and the need to play a more visible and active role in Georgia.

The mandate of the mission was very clear from the very beginning, centred on security assurance aiming at four main goals: stabilisation, normalisation, confidence-building and information provision regarding European policy in view of finding a political lasting solution to the conflicts (*ibidem*: article 1 and 3). The EUMM is entrusted with providing ‘civilian monitoring of Parties’ actions, including full compliance with the six-point Agreement and subsequent implementing measures throughout Georgia’ (*ibidem*: article 2). To this effect, the mission shall contribute to the consolidation of stability in Georgia and surrounding areas, as well as contribute to minimise any possibilities of a resumption of violence, through guaranteeing the agreed provisions at the political level are enforced. Despite the comprehensive mandate, the civilian nature and the lack of executive powers to enforce compliance, suggest that the EU’s new regional positioning in Georgia was carefully concerned both with the image the EU would project and the long-term responsibilities this mission might entail for the CSDP.

The initial mandate of the mission has remained unchanged in its essence in the process of successive mandate renewals (Council of the European Union, 2009b; Council of the European Union, 2010; Council of the European Union, 2011; Council of the European Union, 2012). The mandate’s duration has been an issue of discussion given the conditions in the field and the signs it might give to local partners. However, it has been understood that the EU’s non-commitment to a long-term deployment period on the one hand reflects the assumption that there are conditions for improvement, and on the other hand tries to avoid a ‘refreezing’ of the *status quo* by an over-extended presence (which nevertheless has gradually taken place).

The mission was set-up in a record time frame, initiating its monitoring activities on 1 October 2008, as recommended by the Council (Council of the European Union, 2008e). This has been highlighted as an example of how the EU’s CSDP inter-

governmental dimension might not impair an efficient decision-making and implementation (Sinkkonen, 2011). It should however be noticed that the case of Georgia is by itself a particular case at EU borders. As one of the ambassadors in the PSC put it, there were five major reasons why there was a fast consensus among EU member states regarding the need to deploy this mission: the clear perception that this was a major crisis in the EU neighbourhood; the swift and decisive action of the French presidency of the EU; the major repercussions of the war on EU relations with Russia and the fact that for the first time the role of the EU was accepted by Russia as a crisis manager in the post-Soviet space; the fact that the US was perceived as part of the problem and could not take on the position of mediator; and, finally, pressure from European public opinion to take action and overcome a sense of EU inability to deal with crisis management and assist in the settlement process.⁹

This context favoured a rapid response from the EU which involved all member states in an effort at capacity-building and logistical provision of the necessary conditions for its deployment and functioning. ‘Our Georgia mission has demonstrated what can be achieved when we act collectively with the necessary political will’ (Council of the European Union, 2008h: 9), showing that consensus-building inside the multi-level decision-making process within the EU might be enhanced in face of favourable external factors, as evidenced in this case.

Implementing the mandate

Building on the rapid political decision to deploy the mission, its implementation was facilitated by the EU’s extensive presence in Georgia, linking the mission’s mandate with other EU security-related mechanisms, such as ENP-based reforms, reinforcing the EU’s security actorness. The first months of operation of the EUMM were marked by an adjustment to a quick deployment, where planning and organisational capacities were put under test. Essentially, the institutional image of the mission was at the centre-stage of these adjustments, in order that the monitors could be easily identified by the locals. The EUMM was set up with its headquarters in Tbilisi and three regional offices in Mtskheta, Gori and Zugdidi. The field offices have been in place since day one, though changes have taken place in the course of time. Initially one of these regional offices was established in Poti, by the Black Sea, where Russian vessels had been active.

⁹ Interview with EU member state ambassador to the PSC, Brussels, 17 January 2011.

However, considering that the Black Sea front of the conflict was one of the first to be stabilised this office was closed. Mtskheta, outside the capital, became the headquarters due to the easiest context it provided for initiating patrolling activities (initially this field office was named Tbilisi but due to confusion generated from its designation, it was renamed according to its location). The field office in Gori remains active and the field office in Khashuri was closed after one year, since it covered a limited area of responsibility and was understood as unnecessary to the pursuit of the mission's mandate.¹⁰

According to mission sources, the regional offices have teams working on confidence-building along the ABL, monitoring compliance with the Memoranda of Understanding signed between the Mission and the Georgian Ministries of Defence and Internal Affairs (January 2009, amended in July 2010). These teams are also responsible for regarding the civilian aspects of conflict management, which are inter-related measures, and follow the mandate's guidelines for action (EUMM, 2012). On a daily basis, 15 to 20 patrol teams get around the ABL, shifting times and itineraries to assure better monitoring.

However, despite the daily monitoring of activities along the ABL, this is only pursued on the Georgian side. Clearly, this renders the implementation of the mandate fragile by implying a limited monitoring capacity, thus limiting the security assurances and confidence-building needed for the normalisation of the situation.¹¹ To minimise the negative impact of this impossibility, the mission has been using satellite equipment to observe any troops' and equipment movements beyond the ABL inside these territories, displaying resourcefulness to overcome the hurdles of implementation.¹²

The role of Russia has been central to the whole activity of the mission as well as regarding the efforts to politically find a solution to the undefined situation of (un)recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and how they might be (or not) a part of the Georgian territory in a future settlement. The Russian recognition¹³ of these two 'new' states was criticised by the EU as an 'unacceptable' move not assisting in the evolution of events towards the finding of an acceptable compromise by all parties

¹⁰ Interview with Seconded National Expert, CPCC Conduct of Operations, EEAS, Brussels, 18 January 2011.

¹¹ Interview with EUMM staff, Tbilisi, 10 May 2011.

¹² Interview with Seconded National Expert, CPCC Conduct of Operations, EEAS, Brussels, 18 January 2011.

¹³ Besides Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been recognised by Nauru, Nicaragua, Tuvalu and Venezuela.

(Council of the European Union, 2008d: parag. 2). Russia's influence in the South Caucasus and reinforced military presence in the area is fundamental for its reassertion policy in the CIS space, as well as regarding one of its fundamental domestic threats of instability in the North Caucasus. Thus, Russia has been a limited cooperating actor facilitating the prolongation of the situation and seeking recognition of the current *status quo*. The Georgians heavily criticise Russia for not cooperating openly with the EUMM, highlighting, in particular, their unilateral commitment to the six-point agreement and the non-use of force principle.¹⁴

Making use of the well-developed cooperation mechanisms of the EU with other international organisations, in February 2009, at a meeting in Geneva, Ambassador Charalampos Christopoulos, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Johan Verbeke of the UN and Ambassador Pierre Morel, the former EUSR for the conflicts in Georgia, agreed with the parties the definition of mechanisms that aim at facilitating the process of negotiations and finding a political agreement (OSCE Press Release, 2009). The mechanisms agreed at the time include regular meetings to allow the parties to discuss any incidents and other matters, fostering transparency and trust building – the so-called Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) – which has involved participants from the EUMM, the UN, the OSCE, Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and a 24-hour hotline to report any incidents that might occur and that has served to minimise escalations in tension (EUMM, 2012). The previous work of the EUSR and the confidence-building processes developed by the EU Border Support Team to Georgia were here crucial to assure the participation of the Abkhaz and South Ossetians in these mechanisms, illustrating the advantages of the integrated and comprehensive nature of the EU's security activities in Georgia.

The discussions focus on two main topics: security and stability as a primary concern of EUMM activities and international engagement; and humanitarian issues, related to internally displaced persons and refugees (OSCE Press Release, 2009). However, '[t]he topics that are discussed naturally touch issues that are relevant to human security, but all the participants are representing the state bodies or the de facto authorities of the breakaway districts and the aim is to stabilize the security situation

¹⁴ Interviews with Temur Kekelidze, Deputy Director of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 10 May 2011, and with Lasha Darsalia, Analytical Department Director, Office of the National Security Council of Georgia, 10 May 2011.

from the perspective of those authorities' (Sinkkonen, 2011; 269), which renders the role of the EU limited by the imposed westphalian traditional approach to the issue.

The EUMM has also been working this dimension through monitoring the normalisation of conditions for the safe return of local residents to areas affected by the conflict (it should be recalled that these displaced persons refer not only to the 2008 war, but also to the previous war of 1991-1993). On this matter, the mission has been essentially gathering information that it provides then to other specialised agencies and organisations dealing with humanitarian concerns, given its privileged access to restricted areas and therefore a better knowledge of the situation of local populations.¹⁵ This is a fundamental task regarding confidence-building in line with the transformative role of the EU and its peacebuilding goals. Therefore, as Fischer (2009: 343) argues, this comprehensive approach towards security and closer relations of Tbilisi with the EU are important steps towards making Georgia more attractive to the breakaway regions.

In face of local developments, where the EU is increasingly assuming the role of a security provider, but where, as Antonenko (2009: 266-267) argues, this role is only recognised to Russia within Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the confrontation of different perspectives remains a hard issue to deal with. The EUMM is therefore at a crossroads, being central to keep what the former EUSR for the south Caucasus called a 'EU footprint' in the Caucasus (Semneby, 2012). On the one hand, it has fulfilled its fundamental goal of stabilising the situation and avoiding the return to armed violence. Its monitoring activities, despite limited due to the inability to access Abkhaz and South Ossetian territory, have allowed the clarification of incidents, more transparency in cross-border exchanges and thus contributed to confidence-building both at the level of the parties involved in the negotiations process, as well as regarding the populations. Thus, it ended up performing a double function of raising trust in contributing to both top-down and bottom-up dynamics. On the other hand, the mission has been facing severe constraints to overcome the limitations it has encountered, and these have to do with three main aspects: the political willingness of all parties involved to achieve a settlement, which has clearly been lacking; the role of Russia in this process and the way it becomes a divisive issue within the EU; and the internal dynamics to EU decision-making and the convergence, and in instances difficulties, of articulation of

¹⁵ Interview with EUMM staff, Tbilisi, 10 May 2011.

various instruments at the EU disposal, both at headquarters level and in the field. The case of Georgia is a good illustration in this regard since the combination of various security instruments has provided the EU with capacity to act as a mature security actor in a conflicting region, though not rendering it immune to external factors, in particular, as analysed, the role and leverage of Russia in the area, which hinders the reach of the EU's security approach.

Conclusion

The 2008 August war in Georgia and the way the EU responded to it in terms of its involvement in brokering a cease-fire as well as improving its presence in the field have marked a turning point in the EU's role as a conflict manager and security provider. The late involvement of the EU in the South Caucasus and the regional approach it attached to its conditionality regarding the promotion of rapprochement with the three Caucasus states rendered the EU object of criticism by these states (see Simão and Freire 2008). Moreover, its involvement was mainly focused on the promotion of reforms, dealing with democracy-building and human security-related matters, not implying the EU involvement in the frozen conflicts under the official mediation of other international actors. However, the events of the summer of 2008 led to an enhanced role of the EU, providing a unique opportunity for testing its capabilities as a conflict manager and security provider.

The rendering operational of the EUMM's mandate, however, has been a complex process, as daily operations are highly interdependent in nature and purposes. Although the goal of stabilisation has been achieved and the resort to violence seems to be sidelined, the preservation of the *status quo* and its extension in time does not play favourably to the EU's role in Georgia. The reinforcement of the Russian presence in the country, through the recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the remaining military presence seems to be part of Russia's overall strategic goal of reasserting its presence in the area. Therefore, the space for negotiating within this framing seems extremely limited. The acceptance of the EU's presence by Russia should, nevertheless, be highlighted. This was possible essentially given the limited mandate of the EUMM and what Russia sees as a very limited capability of the EU on crisis management, thus not understanding the EU's presence as a threat to the preservation of the *status quo*. This constitutes clearly a challenge to the EU, and the EUMM in particular, in the sense of stabilising the situation while not legitimising the

status quo. In face of these challenges and difficulties what might the EU do? A broader understanding of stabilisation should be put in place, in line with the peacebuilding agenda analysed.

This would allow a deeper involvement in the process at the grass roots level providing opportunities for change to take place through improving people-to-people contacts and building popular support to political leaders engaged in positive change. Following the surprising results of the parliamentary elections of October 2012 (Bidzina Ivanishvili, leader of the Georgian Dream Alliance, defeated the ruling United National Movement, president Saakashvili's party, allowing for the first time in Georgia peaceful transition of power), the relations between the new Georgian government and the EUMM will be crucial for the future of the peace process and for the mission itself. Although these are long-term processes, in a step-by-step formula they might lead to pressure over the authorities for change, increasing the chances of success for the EU's security model, combining deep reforms and integration policies with the deployment of missions and confidence-building instruments that are part of its role as a security actor. Clearly, the EU also needs to further involve Russia in the process, not only by sitting at the negotiations table, but also by providing incentives for a more flexible Russian positioning towards the regional conflicts in its neighbourhood. This is a fundamental question in the consolidation of the maturity the EU has achieved as a security actor in the South Caucasus, since Russia is a key player in the finding of a political settlement.

The EU has the mechanisms and procedures of a security provider in the Caucasus and beyond. It has evolved historically, grounding its development as a security actor in its founding principles, on the promotion of democracy, and on the reading of integration in its various dimensions, and both formal and informal formats, as part of a regional peace project. The development of institutional procedures and the empowerment of operational instruments to respond to security challenges, particularly in its neighbourhood, have rendered the EU a recognised regional security actor. The adding of CSDP missions to the tool-kit of this security provider allowed for the consolidation of its actuation as a security actor. Moreover, the on-going development of the European External Action Service could further contribute to increase coherence in EU's security action. Clearly, the deployment of the EUMM in Georgia signalled the achievement of maturity by consolidating the EU's involvement in the Georgian conflicts, not only through the measures associated to the ENP and EaP frameworks, but also through a direct involvement in crisis management.

However, the process of consolidation of the EU's security actorness is not complete. 'Five years ago, the [European Security Strategy] set out a vision of how the EU would be a force for a fairer, safer and more united world. We have come a long way towards that. But the world around us is changing fast, with evolving threats and shifting powers. To build a secure Europe in a better world, we must do more to shape events' (Council of the European Union, 2008h: 12). In fact, the need for further internal coordination among EU member states and institutions, and the management of relations with the Russian Federation need further streamlining in order to render EU actions more effective in changing the local and regional contexts towards sustainable peace.

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