

# Measuring European Foreign Policy Impact: The EU and the Georgia Crisis of 2008

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## **Abstract**

This paper assesses the political influence of the European Union (EU) on the Russo-Georgian conflict in August 2008 by systematically categorising all cases of European foreign policy (EFP) action in this context according to their impact. Based on a modified version of Roy Ginsberg's framework for measuring political impact, the paper explicitly uses an 'outside-in' perspective, i.e. it focuses on how third countries perceive and experience European foreign policy actions. To what extent and how did the EU have a political impact on the conflicting parties during the 2008 war in Georgia? The research finds that in fifty percent of all cases European foreign policy had a considerable or significant impact on both Georgia and Russia, whereas in the other half, the impact was only marginal or even nil. Most importantly, the EU exerted this impact without the use of any kind of coercive means or the threat thereof – let alone military measures. European foreign policy often successfully relied on diplomatic means, persuasion through negotiations, declarations and financial incentives. The results challenge traditional thinking, according to which more foreign policy capabilities – military in particular – are a necessary precondition in order for the EU to become a credible player in world politics.

*"The problem of Georgia is not just Georgia's problem. Willingly or unwillingly this is also a European problem. Europe, together with the US, needs to cooperate in order to confront this issue and assure peace and stability for Georgia."*<sup>1</sup>

Giorgi Baramidze, Georgian Deputy Prime Minister

## 1. Introduction: An Effective EU Foreign Policy?

After several months of rising tensions between the Republic of Georgia, its two breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the Russian Federation, a fully-fledged war broke out on the night of 7 August 2008. The EU and its member states tried to influence the conflict via several initiatives, including the conclusion of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), Georgia's inclusion in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the development of comprehensive peace plans. The military clash, although relatively small and short, had a "shocking effect and caused surprise for most commentators and politicians, since military conflict between sovereign states in Europe had been perceived as a thing of the past".<sup>2</sup> It was the first war in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many experts had not expected war to break out after the NATO Bucharest Summit of April 2008, which was originally meant to bring Georgia and Ukraine closer to the West.<sup>3</sup> In reaction, the EU stood up and intervened both in Tbilisi and Moscow. French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who held the EU Presidency in the second half of 2008, visited Russia and Georgia several times, and many French and EU representatives were flanking his initiative. Only five days after the outbreak of the hostilities Sarkozy was able to announce the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement on 12 August 2008, which eventually led to the retreat of Russian troops.

It seems that the EU had notable political influence on the tide of events during and after the crisis in Georgia. But given Russia's political leverage and a possible convergence of European and Russian interests, there are also critical voices asking to what extent the EU was really able to achieve something significant.<sup>4</sup> It is a reality

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<sup>1</sup> G. Gotev, "Georgia Minister: Russia Could Be a Good Neighbour", interview with Giorgi Baramidze, Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia, *EurActiv.com*, Brussels, 3 December 2009.

<sup>2</sup> P. Joenniemi, "The Georgian-Russian Conflict: a Turning-point?", *DIIS Working Paper*, no. 2, Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2010, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Right before the Summit, a US scholar even argued that offering access for Georgia and Ukraine to the Membership Action Plan "may, ultimately, set the stage for closer relations with Russia" by bringing them under NATO's security umbrella and thus encouraging further disarmament. B. Jackson, "NATO Expansion and Modern Europe", in R. Shepherd (ed.), *The Bucharest Conference Papers*, Washington, DC, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2008, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> W. Stützele, "Man kann hier überhaupt nicht von Sieger sprechen. Walther Stützele über die Konsequenzen aus dem Georgien-Krieg", interview in Deutschlandfunk, 13 August 2008.

that throughout the period of conflict there were numerous European foreign policy actions, including visits by politicians, extensive peace talks, political pressure, the threat of sanctions and the offer to become engaged on the ground. This raises the question of how much political influence the EU actually had and by what means this influence had been exerted. Knowledge about the extent and effectiveness of the EU's foreign policy impact is pivotal in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of its general foreign policy performance. Studying EFP is particularly challenging because of its uniqueness when compared to the classical foreign policy of nation-states. The latter is mostly based on "realpolitik and balance of power politics"<sup>5</sup> and in such a game the EU is likely to get the short end of the stick. The Union is put at a structural disadvantage whenever an analysis of its foreign policy is based on traditional nation-state capabilities (such as military strength and other coercive policies), and yet that is the methodology many studies employ.<sup>6</sup>

This paper therefore suggests it is most appropriate to evaluate EFP's success from an outsider's perspective, rather than analysing the efficiency of internal policy making procedures, because it is crucial to go beyond understanding the Union's capabilities or output (which is *sui generis* and often different from those of nation-states) and to scrutinise to what extent EFP is actually able to shape the actions of third countries. Taking the Georgian war of 2008 as an example, the paper assesses to what extent and by what means the EU has been able to effectively influence the behaviour, policies or interests of Georgia and Russia.<sup>7</sup> The study explicitly takes an outside-in approach and intends not to merely analyse foreign policy output that the EU might produce (such as declarations, condemnations or meetings), but to measure real outcome. For this purpose, it uses a simplified version of a framework by Roy Ginsberg, which helps to operationalise the measurement of EFP effectiveness.<sup>8</sup> When measuring political impact, the researcher has to deal with several problems inherent to the analysis of qualitative data. Issues that will first need to be addressed

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<sup>5</sup> R. Ginsberg, *The European Union in International Politics*, Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> See for example D. Mahncke, A. Ambos & C. Reynolds (eds.), *European Foreign Policy: From Rhetoric to Reality?*, Brussels, P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2004; R. Yakemtchouk, *La politique étrangère de l'Union européenne*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005; M. Jopp & P. Schlotter (eds.), *Kollektive Außenpolitik: Die Europäische Union als internationaler Akteur*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Strictly speaking, there have been four conflicting parties: Russia, Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. However, given the high level of dependence of the two regions from Russia and their inability to lead or influence a war such as the one of 2008, it seems reasonable to focus our analysis on the EU's political impact on Russia and Georgia.

<sup>8</sup> Ginsberg, *op.cit.*

include the definition of thresholds and terms as well as the problem of reliability and validity. Second, we will discuss eight examples of European foreign policy actions, a selection which aims to represent all 16 EFP cases that have been identified within the relevant time frame.<sup>9</sup> They will be categorised according to the framework in order to determine the extent to which the EU's foreign policy output had an impact on the conflicting parties. Third, the conclusions will be presented together with a brief assessment of the performance of Ginsberg's framework and its ability to address the afore-mentioned problems.

## 2. Outputs and Outcomes: Measuring Political Impact

### 2.1 Introducing the Analytical Framework

For this analysis the term 'EFP action' will be rather broadly defined: it is assumed that the EU (be it the Council, the Commission or the Parliament) rarely has an influence alone. Given the large number of more or less official actors within the EU system it is understood that all of them can at times act on behalf of the Union and/or have an impact on its international standing as a whole. Therefore, when talking about EFP action, this paper explicitly includes all actions by the institutions, the member states and any officials acting on their behalf. We will call these actions the foreign policy *output* of the EU.

An EFP output only results in an external political impact if it affects a third country such that "nonmembers modify or change the direction or substance of a domestic or foreign policy that would not likely have occurred in the absence of EU stimulus or EU stimulus accompanied by stimuli from other international actors", or that "nonmembers' interests are beneficially or adversely affected by EFP action".<sup>10</sup> Moreover, it is important to note that the notion of external political impact within our framework does not carry much of a judgement, i.e. it does not equate foreign policy impact with foreign policy success.<sup>11</sup> Although a successful foreign policy may be an indicator for prior political impact, the failure of achieving a foreign policy goal is not considered a proof that there had been no impact. Our aim here is to analyse the EU's political impact, not its performance in freeing Georgia from Russian occupation or reuniting it with its breakaway regions.

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<sup>9</sup> The complete list of EFP actions is presented in the annex of this paper.

<sup>10</sup> Ginsberg, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

To structure this scrutiny, our framework provides a four-category system in order to determine the effectiveness of EFP impact and allows us to classify each single foreign policy action accordingly. However, each categorisation of qualitative data risks being a highly subjective exercise. To make the division conclusive, it is essential (1) to carefully define the thresholds between the four categories and (2) to thoroughly collect, review and judge the facts that will corroborate the categorisation. The following definitions include an explanatory example for each category taken from Ginsberg's own case studies.<sup>12</sup>

- a. A foreign policy action has *nil political influence* when it "does not result in political impact or [aims] to have political impact but does not succeed [...]. With nil political impact, the EU has no influence on nonmembers and their interests". This category is relatively simple to determine because either the EU has some impact or it has not. No further delimitation has to be done. Example: In 1997, the EU proposed a code of conduct between the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) and Israel in order to improve their relations. The proposal "languishes due to lack of consensus".
- b. EFP actions have *marginal political impact* when they influence a nonmember's policies or interests generally or indirectly, but still without effecting an actual change or modification in behaviour. The influence can be either beneficial or adverse. Example: In 1998, the EU protested Israel's settlements by sending its Presidency to Har Homa, a settlement outside the internationally recognised borders of Israel. The EU "angers [and] isolates Israel, which views [the] visit as unacceptable". The Israeli reaction shows that their interests have been affected by the EU's condemnation and visit, but there is no proof that the EU has caused changes in Israel's behaviour or policies, such as stopping (or intensifying) the settlements or coming back to the negotiation table.
- c. The EU has *considerable political impact* when its actions "tangibly influence the domestic, foreign and/or security policy, interests or behaviour of a nonmember". Considerable impact requires "major beneficial or adverse political impact on interests and may effect a change or modification in the behaviour or domestic, foreign and/or security policy of a nonmember". To find the threshold between marginal and considerable impact is a particularly tricky endeavour. The

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<sup>12</sup> For the following quotations see *ibid.*, pp. 52-54. Examples from Ginsberg's annex, table 5.1 (no page numbers available).

difference lies both in the word 'tangible' and in the fact that considerable impact requires a 'major' influence (as compared to a general or indirect one) and may induce actual policy changes. Example: In 1999, the EU supported accountability reforms within the P.A. by co-financing a Task Force, which came up with recommendations and assisted its implementation. Many of the recommendations have been implemented. This instance demonstrates not a merely general influence on interests, but a real policy modification towards more financial transparency and accountability that has been caused by EU support.

- d. Lastly, EFP actions have *significant political impact* when they are "primarily and directly responsible for a change or modification in the behaviour or domestic, foreign and/or security policy of a nonmember". Additionally, the EU's impact must "affect vital interests" and must be exerted alone or in a group of two or three other international actors. The conditions for EFP to have significant impact are thus observably higher than those for considerable impact. Example: In 1999, the EU stated its "willingness to consider Palestinian statehood at later date if [an own] declaration [of statehood] is postponed until after Israeli election". As a result, the P.A. indeed postponed this declaration, allowing Arafat to quit without losing face and the EU to prevent a deterioration of the crisis. Thus, the EU has been primarily and directly responsible for a policy change that can be considered to be of vital interest and a major security concern to the P.A.

It is important to note that even after a careful definition of the categories, in some cases there will be room for ambiguity and some categorisations may rely on subjective judgements. The primary results of the analysis are summarised in the table reproduced in the appendix.<sup>13</sup> It identifies 16 instances of EFP actions from the beginning of the 1990s until February 2009, which have had – or were supposed to have – an influence on the 2008 war in Georgia. The actual outcome or result of each EFP action is listed in the table's fifth column, followed by the assigned level of political impact (nil, marginal, considerable or significant). The table gives a

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<sup>13</sup> J. Weisensee, "Measuring European Foreign Policy Impact: The EU and the Georgia Crisis of 2008", Master's Thesis, Bruges, College of Europe 2010 (unpublished).

comprehensive overview of the research results.<sup>14</sup> The text will regularly refer to the various actions via the numbering in the very first column. In order to get a more chronological overview of the course of events and EFP actions, the reader may prefer to have a closer look at the table before reading the analysis itself.

## 2.2 Challenges for the Research Design

Obviously, the most difficult part of the argumentation is to identify a link between output and outcome. While demonstrating correlations between political actions and events on the ground seems to be a relatively easy task to do, proving a causal relationship is a much more problematic exercise. In the simplest case, one can rely on public declarations and statements of interests. If on day 1, for instance, country B openly rejects cooperation with country A, on day 2 country A pressures country B for cooperation, and on day 3 country B suddenly changes its mind on the issue, political impact of country A can easily be claimed. Unfortunately, in reality most cases are not this unambiguous. Interests are often unclear and the timing is more complicated. Moreover, in the real world there are more actors than just country A and B. Given the high number and the often overlapping activities of international actors, including nation-states, international organisations and informal groupings like the G20, it is sometimes difficult to credit one outcome to one particular actor. Ginsberg argues that the picture also risks being distorted because EU member states tend to claim political success as their own, even when they acted through an EU framework, whereas “the EU itself does not promote its accomplishments”.<sup>15</sup>

For example, it is possible for a country to claim a foreign policy success which it would not have achieved without its position within or the backing from the EU and its other members. Equally, the EU may be successful in a case only thanks to the capabilities of one or two particular member states. In this analysis it is therefore assumed that the EU can exert its impact in cooperation or even in unintended interplay with other actors without downgrading the effectiveness of its own

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<sup>14</sup> This table is a simplified version of Ginsberg’s original framework for two reasons: First, Ginsberg also collects information about the type of measure (cognitive or empirical) that he uses for the categorisation of EFP actions. However, the concept of these types of measure is difficult to apply consistently because it remains somewhat unclear whether they actually describe the type of measure the researcher used or the type of impact the EU had. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52. Second, the framework also allows to analyse the EU’s impact on third actors who are not directly parties to the conflict. This ‘relative impact’, although probably existent in the case of Georgia (e.g., the US, the UN, NATO, etc.), lies beyond the scope of our analysis.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

influence, and foreign policy actions of EU member states that are pursuing a declared Union goal are treated as genuine EFP actions.<sup>16</sup> For instance, although Sarkozy personally assumed an overwhelming role during most of the negotiation process that aimed to cease the Russo-Georgian hostilities, it is consistent to credit his achievements to the EU, which he was representing. Indeed, Russian officials and politicians seem to have been quite impressed by the French President's performance and perceived him as a true EU representative.<sup>17</sup> Or as Dominic Fean has put it: "En profitant de la présidence européenne, Nicolas Sarkozy a mis tout le poids de l'UE, de son pays et de sa propre personne dans la balance pour peser lors des pourparlers."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the Union and its members make a good team and it seems impossible to disaggregate their influence.

### 3. The Political Impact of the EU on the War in Georgia

The following eight examples of EFP action aim to demonstrate how the analysis has been conducted in order to answer the question to what extent and by what means the EU had political impact during the 2008 war in Georgia. The cases are presented in sub-chapters reflecting their classification in the four categories in order to facilitate comparison and to increase plausibility. Within the sub-chapters they are presented chronologically. Each case has a number indicating its position within the annexed table.

#### 3.1 Nil Political Impact

*Case 10:* In an attempt to push Russia for a withdrawal of troops, the EU Presidency announced on 1 September 2008 that "until troops have withdrawn to the positions held prior to 7 August, meetings on the negotiation of the Partnership Agreement will be postponed".<sup>19</sup> The re-establishment of the situation prior to the outbreak of

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<sup>16</sup> According to Ginsberg, the EU can have political impact "acting alone or as one of several actors", see explanations above. *Ibid.*, p. 53. The only limitation envisaged is for the strongest category: "The EU has significant political impact – acting alone or as one of two or three other actors". *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Timofei Bordachev, Director, Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies, State University – Higher School of Economics (HSE), Brussels, 25 March 2010.

<sup>18</sup> D. Fean, "Du bon usage de l'UE en Géorgie : 'Partenariat oriental' et gestion des conflits", *Russie.Nei.Visions*, no. 44, Paris, Institut français des relations internationales, September 2009, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Council of the European Union, *Presidency Conclusions*, 12594/2/08 REV 2, 1 September 2008.

hostilities is a central requirement of the six-point agreement. In a much-cited statement, Nicolas Sarkozy clarified:

“Le 15 octobre, il ne doit plus y avoir un seul soldat russe qui soit sur des positions qui n'étaient pas celles où il se trouvait avant le 7 août. C'est clair et c'est simple. Soit c'est fait et, dans ce cas-là, chacun a respecté sa parole, soit ce n'est pas fait et alors, cinq jours plus tard, l'Europe en tirera les conséquences.”<sup>20</sup>

Russia for its part argued it was allowed to take additional security measures “dans l'attente d'un mécanisme international”, as stipulated by the agreement.<sup>21</sup> However, by reading the fifth point of the agreement carefully, it becomes clear that this exception is only meant for the Russian peacekeeping force (i.e. about 500 soldiers under UN mandate): “*les forces de paix russes mettront en œuvre des mesures additionnelles de sécurité*”, whereas “*les forces militaires russes devront se retirer sur les lignes antérieures au déclenchement des hostilités*” [emphases added]. By early October, almost all Russian troops had indeed left Georgia proper.<sup>22</sup> Within Abkhazia and South Ossetia, however, the armed forces had undergone a strong build-up and eventually numbered 7,600.<sup>23</sup> Through the suspension of the PCA negotiations the EU failed to convince Russia to comply with the six-point agreement, and in November 2008 the Council decided to resume the negotiations despite Russia's continued non-compliance.<sup>24</sup> In addition to this consistency problem, it has been argued that Europe, by resuming the negotiations, wasted one of its strongest (perhaps its only) trump card to pressure Russia to comply with all six points.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Joint Press Conference of Nicolas Sarkozy and Mikheil Saakashvili, Tbilisi, 8 September 2008.

<sup>21</sup> The six-point agreement reads: “1/ Ne pas recourir à la force. 2/ Cesser les hostilités de façon définitive. 3/ Donner libre accès à l'aide humanitaire. 4/ Les forces militaires géorgiennes devront se retirer dans leurs lieux habituels de cantonnement. 5/ Les forces militaires russes devront se retirer sur leurs lignes antérieures au déclenchement des hostilités. Dans l'attente d'un mécanisme international, les forces de paix russes mettront en œuvre des mesures additionnelles de sécurité. 6/ Ouverture de discussions internationales sur les modalités de sécurité et de stabilité en Abkhazie et en Ossétie du Sud.” A copy of the original agreement can be found at [http://smr.gov.ge/uploads/file/Six\\_Point\\_Peace\\_Plan.pdf](http://smr.gov.ge/uploads/file/Six_Point_Peace_Plan.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> In the following, the term ‘Georgia proper’ will be used for the Georgian territory excluding South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

<sup>23</sup> “Georgia Confirms Russian Pullout”, *The New York Times*, 8 October 2008.

<sup>24</sup> R. Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 213.

<sup>25</sup> S. Fischer, “European Policy towards the South Caucasus after the Georgia Crisis”, *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, no. 1, Zurich, Russian and Eurasian Security Network, 17 December 2008, p. 5.

Although the very brief and then unconditionally lifted suspension of PCA negotiations might have had a positive influence on EU-Russia relations, it had nil political impact on the conflicting parties.

*Case 12:* Fully consistent with the EU's position on Georgia's territorial integrity, on 8 September 2008 the French President made clear that the Monitoring Mission (EUMM), which the EU agreed to deploy, would operate in the whole of Georgia, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia.<sup>26</sup> This is also reflected in the Joint Action of the Council establishing EUMM, which stipulates that the mission shall fulfil its mandate "throughout Georgia".<sup>27</sup> However, the Russian interpretation of this notion is different, arguing that with the formal recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia the situation has changed fundamentally: "From a legal point of view [...] new states have come into existence now",<sup>28</sup> and therefore, Abkhazia and South Ossetia could not be considered part of Georgia in the sense of the ceasefire agreement. Sarkozy's promise that EUMM would be deployed within the regions is all the more startling as the agreement which he achieved with President Medvedev earlier the same day (8 September) reads the contrary: "Les préparatifs seront accélérés pour permettre le déploiement d'observateurs supplémentaires [européennes] dans les zones adjacentes à l'Ossétie du Sud et à l'Abkhazie".<sup>29</sup> Principally in line with this wording (but less restrictive), the website of the French President explains: "Les nouveaux observateurs de l'UE seront, eux, déployés *en priorité* dans les zones adjacentes à l'Abkhazie et à l'Ossétie du Sud" [emphasis added].<sup>30</sup> It seems clear that Sarkozy had no choice but to accept Russia's firm position on the matter. "The Russians have consistently said that the EU will never ever monitor inside these areas [of South Ossetia and Abkhazia]. They have never given it the slightest chance."<sup>31</sup> It seems that from the beginning EUMM had two mandates, one agreed in Moscow and one

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<sup>26</sup> "Je dois préciser [...] : les observateurs internationaux ne sont pas limités à la délimitation administrative de l'Ossétie et de l'Abkhazie mais pourront pénétrer à l'intérieur". Joint Press Conference of Nicolas Sarkozy and Mikheil Saakashvili, *op.cit.*

<sup>27</sup> European Union, "Council Joint Action on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, EUMM Georgia", *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2008/736/CFSP, 15 September 2008, art. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Kremlin, "Interview given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Rossia, NTV", 31 August 2008.

<sup>29</sup> "Mise en œuvre du Plan du 12 août 2008", 8 September 2008 Agreement.

<sup>30</sup> Présidence de la République, "Pour résoudre le conflit, la France et l'Europe en première ligne", 31 March 2010, p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Phone interview with Janne Taalas, Director of Policy Planning and Research, Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 23 April 2010. Also see R. Allison, "Russia Resurgent? Moscow's Campaign to 'Coerce Georgia to Peace'", *International Affairs*, vol. 84, no. 6, 2008, p. 1159.

agreed in Brussels – and they were not the same.<sup>32</sup> To date, EUMM staff have never been permitted to monitor the two regions, and it is clear that Europe will not be able to change this status quo against Moscow's will'.<sup>33</sup> The EU therefore had nil impact on Russia's decision to prevent its mission from monitoring the breakaway regions.

### 3.2 Marginal Political Impact

*Case 1:* Throughout the 1990s the EU tried to have a stabilising impact in the Southern Caucasus, first through its Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with Georgia and later by the appointment of a Special Representative and the inclusion of the region in the newly created European Neighbourhood Policy. Most measures were aimed at supporting economic development, stability and reform, targets to which the EU dedicated impressive amounts of money.<sup>34</sup> The only element of political engagement was the appointment of Heikki Talvitie as the first EU Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus directly after the Georgian Rose Revolution in 2003. The Special Representative was the pivotal EU figure responsible for dealing with all parties involved, including the *de facto* authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. However, in an interview, Talvitie underlined that his influence in Tbilisi had been inversely proportional to that in Tskhinvali.<sup>35</sup> Generally sceptical of Saakashvili's policies, his relations with the Georgian President deteriorated to the extent in which he became active with the South Ossetians. With respect to Abkhazia, at that time the EU's stand was even more limited: "Quite frankly I let Abkhazia to Heidi [Tagliavini]...".<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> One could blame Sarkozy of untruthfulness. However, the former EU Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus suggests, that Sarkozy just did not get the geopolitical situation straight: The South Ossetian borders were not as clear during the conflict as they are today, and in his mind, the zones adjacent to South Ossetia could well have included the parts of the region over which Tbilisi held control before the war. Phone interview with Heikki Talvitie, Former EU Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus and Member of the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship Team 2008, 27 April 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Javier Solana admitted that there are "no military or diplomatic tools to force the Russians out of the enclaves". Cited in M. Fricnova, "Georgia After the August War: Implications for EU Engagement", *Briefing Paper*, Policy Department External Policies of the European Parliament, Brussels, October 2008, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> For years, "the EU has primarily been an aid provider rather than a political actor", and in 2008, the EU also was by far the biggest donor in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. International Crisis Group, "Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus: The EU's Role", *Europe Report*, Brussels, no. 173, 20 March 2006, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Phone interview with Heikki Talvitie, *op.cit.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* Heidi Tagliavini was Head of UNOMIG, the UN Observer Mission in Abkhazia, from 2002 to 2006.

While focussing mainly on the economic aspects of stabilisation and conflict resolution, Europe did not respond to any hard security demands whatsoever, thus creating an increasing level of frustration among Georgian officials and politicians who considered the EU's approach to be "outdated".<sup>37</sup> In addition, there seems to be no comprehensive impact assessment of the EU's activities in this field and it remains unclear to what extent Georgia's economic development might have had an impact on the course of the conflict itself. One observer rightly asked "what is the European Union's few million [worth] when Russia is promising the Ossetians a future?"<sup>38</sup> What is clear is that the EU's focus on economic assistance as well as its refusal to be more engaged in terms of security allowed other actors, such as Russia, to fill this gap in the breakaway regions. By influencing the Georgian reform agenda and probably strengthening the country's European aspirations, the impact of EU programmes on the conflict can at most be considered to be marginal, i.e. a general or indirect impact on Georgia's interests without effecting an actual change in its behaviour.

*Case 13:* As foreseen by the six-point and the 8 September agreements, the EU, OSCE and UN were aiming to avoid another freeze in the conflict by pushing to launch the so-called 'Geneva talks'. Between 15 October 2008 and 30 March 2010 there had been ten rounds of discussions, involving the three chairing organisations plus Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and US representatives. One of the most important outputs of the Geneva meetings is the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), which has established a basis for regular meetings both between Georgian and Abkhaz and between Georgian and South Ossetian representatives. These meetings aim to resolve practical administrative issues on the ground, such as the release of detainees and border incidents between citizens or police forces, but at least with respect to South Ossetia, there have been numerous disappointments.<sup>39</sup> The Ossetian representatives still only agree to meet at the administrative border line (a place that basically consists of a muddy field), and besides the agreement to set up a tent and to install a fuel-driven heater, not much has been achieved so far.<sup>40</sup> In October 2009, South Ossetia announced its withdrawal from the mechanism for 'organisational reasons', expecting Georgia to

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<sup>37</sup> International Crisis Group, *op.cit.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> See for example European Monitoring Mission in Georgia, "EUMM Disappointed that Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism Meeting Will not Take Place", 20 June 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with a European diplomat, Brussels, 31 March 2010.

recognise its independence before cooperation can take place.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, the Abkhaz authorities permit meetings to take place in the clearly more conducive atmosphere of a former UN building. After the recent meeting in Sukhumi (23 March 2010) all sides welcomed “ways to co-operate and exchange information on the fight against criminal activities” and – after discussions in a “business-like atmosphere” – EUMM invited Abkhaz media to visit their premises and to “see for themselves the role and work of the EUMM”.<sup>42</sup> Although there has been some progress since the launch of the IPRM, it is hardly possible to determine any tangible change of policies or behaviour on either side. The fact that the parties do meet at all in such a setting – though a noteworthy success – can rather be defined as a general influence on interests as long as they do not lead to real political commitments. The Geneva talks, of which the IPRM is the most far-reaching output, have so far had only a marginal impact on the conflicting parties. They are merely important “to keep the issue open”.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.3 Considerable Political Impact

*Case 7:* Right after the outbreak of the war on 7 August 2008, the French President’s diplomatic advisers tried to convince their Russian counterparts to halt the advance of troops and on 11 August Sarkozy suggested he travel to Moscow in order to negotiate with Medvedev directly. “But French national security advisor Jean-David Levitte was afraid that, while negotiating a peace deal, Sarkozy could be profoundly humiliated by the Russian army having taken Tbilisi and overthrown the Georgian government.”<sup>44</sup> Therefore, Sarkozy set two conditions before he would agree to come to Moscow: first, that there would be a truce in place at the moment of his arrival, and second, that Russia would refrain from continuing on to Tbilisi.<sup>45</sup> When the French President landed in Moscow on the morning of 12 August, both conditions were met. This instance shows a significant impact of an EFP action, because the French conditions directly led to a truce and the stop of Russia’s army on their way to

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<sup>41</sup> U. Halbach, “Die Europäische Beobachtungsmission in Georgien: Friedenssicherung auf umstrittener Grundlage”, in M. Asseburg & R. Kempin (eds.), *Die EU als strategischer Akteur in der Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik?*, German Institute for International and Security Studies (SWP), Berlin, December 2009, p. 133.

<sup>42</sup> European Monitoring Mission in Georgia, “Exchange of Information on Specific Civilian Cases, Various Incidents and the Ability to Cross the Inguri River Were Key Points Discussed at the Fourteenth IPRM Meeting in Gali”, 26 March 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Janne Taalas, *op.cit.*

<sup>44</sup> Asmus, *op.cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

the Georgian capital, i.e. a modification of Russia's behaviour. It is, however, debatable to what extent this modification did affect 'vital interests'. Of course, in a war situation, most decisions can have an impact on vital interests, but Russia's unilateral stop of hostilities could have been revoked at any time and would not necessarily have caused a military disadvantage for its armed forces, which were outrunning the Georgian forces both in terms of troops and equipment.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the truce was only temporary. Fighting resumed after the negotiations and reportedly ended not earlier than 16 August.<sup>47</sup> It is thus reasonable to credit only considerable political impact to the conditions set by the French President.

*Case 14:* In line with its pre-war policy, the EU sought to support economic reconstruction in Georgia after the end of hostilities. Georgia had lost much of its military capabilities in the battle and claimed overall damage to be around one billion euros.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, in 2008 Georgia faced a twofold challenge: the war, which destroyed infrastructure and investor confidence, and the global financial crisis, which put pressure on Georgia's currency and increased credit prices. As a result of both, the country's economic growth dropped from 9 to 3.5 percent and estimations expect an increase in the unemployment rate from 13 to more than 15 percent. A special World Bank working group proposed "that donors extend fresh commitments in the amount of 3.25 billion US dollars over a three year period".<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the EU together with the World Bank organised an international donors' conference which took place on 22 October 2008 in Brussels. During this conference, the two organisations raised 3.4 billion euros for the reconstruction of Georgia, including 1.9 billion from non-European donors.<sup>50</sup> The funds are destined for the resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs), economic rehabilitation and recovery, macro-financial stabilisation and infrastructure support.<sup>51</sup> To what extent this overwhelming financial support had an impact on the conflict is very difficult to measure, but most observers conclude that the international aid pledged in Brussels was of great importance for the stabilisation of the Georgian economy.<sup>52</sup> Georgian

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<sup>46</sup> Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, "Report. Volume II", September 2009, pp. 214-217.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>49</sup> World Bank, "Georgia: Summary of Joint Needs Assessment Findings", October 2008, p. iii.

<sup>50</sup> European Commission & World Bank, "Georgia Donors' Conference", Brussels, 22 October 2008.

<sup>51</sup> European Union, "EU Assistance Fact Sheet: Georgia", MEMO/08/645, 22 October 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Frichova, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-10. "Ce financement est capital pour la poursuite du développement et du maintien de la stabilité de la Géorgie." Fean, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

officials go even further and underline that Western help was ‘significant’ for stabilising the government and preventing social unrest.<sup>53</sup> Georgia’s Deputy Prime Minister, who assured the money would be used for houses for IDPs as well as larger infrastructure projects, emphasised that “[w]ithout the money that arrived from Europe, the US and even Japan, [...] it would have created internal social strain, tensions, turbulences, and Georgia would not have survived in this kind of situation: both the government and the people”.<sup>54</sup> Through financial assistance, the EU therefore succeeded at least in strengthening Georgia’s pre-war reconstruction policies, causing a tangible modification of these policies. Considering Georgia’s skyrocketing foreign debts (2.3 billion US dollars in 2007 and 3.4 billion in 2008<sup>55</sup>), it seems also likely that EU funds not only strengthened Georgia’s reconstruction policies, but that they boosted them from a near-to-zero level. In any event, the EU had a considerable impact on these post-war Georgian policies.

Some observers raise another argument with respect to Georgia’s political stability: namely that Russia wanted to prevent NATO expansion<sup>56</sup> and to topple the Georgian government – thus replacing Saakashvili, whom Putin is said to hate personally.<sup>57</sup> Georgian Deputy Prime Minister Giorgi Baramidze argued that “none of the Georgian leaders have ever been acceptable to Russia” and explained that historically not less than four Georgian governments have been “kicked out” by Moscow.<sup>58</sup> Some also see economic reasons for this line of argument, emphasising the high number of influential Moscow-based businessmen with Georgian origins, who allegedly “favor a future power transfer which would allow a normalization of relations – and trade”.<sup>59</sup> But perhaps the strongest argument is Condoleezza Rice’s claim that in a phone call on 10 August Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov “insisted [...] that there was an additional Russian condition for ending the war,

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<sup>53</sup> E-mail interview with Georgian Senior Official, Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 April 2010.

<sup>54</sup> Gotev, *op.cit.*

<sup>55</sup> World Bank, “Georgia at a Glance”, 12 September 2009.

<sup>56</sup> See analysis of case 3 below.

<sup>57</sup> Asmus, *op.cit.*, pp. 108, 159. During his negotiations with Sarkozy, Putin reportedly said “I want to hang Saakashvili by the balls”. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>58</sup> Gotev, *op.cit.*

<sup>59</sup> Frichova, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

namely that Mikheil Saakashvili had to go".<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, Russia never confirmed this conversation explicitly. However, asked by his American counterpart during the UN Security Council meeting the same day whether Russia's intentions in Georgia were regime change, the Russian ambassador to the UN – somewhat beating around the bush – indirectly confirmed that this would be in Russia's interest.<sup>61</sup> If it is true that Russia wanted to overthrow Saakashvili, then the political stabilisation of his government provided by EFP action would have affected Georgia's vital interests, and could thus be considered a significant impact. However, since such a line of reasoning about the EU's role in saving Saakashvili's government remains disputed, the instance is only coded as a considerable impact.

### 3.4 Significant Political Impact

*Case 3:* On 3 April 2008, NATO held its Bucharest Summit, during which it planned to express its position on whether Georgia (among others) would be granted access to the Membership Action Plan programme (MAP). While most NATO members (especially the US and Eastern European states) were strongly supportive of such a step, some countries (namely Germany and France) opposed it.<sup>62</sup> Officially, they were doubtful of the extent to which Georgia was ready for MAP in terms of democratisation and military advancement. Taking into account that MAP is a programme of "advice, assistance and practical support", which does not "prejudge any decision by the Alliance on future membership",<sup>63</sup> this official standing is hardly convincing.

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<sup>60</sup> After Lavrov claiming that this was a confidential conversation, according to her own statement Rice answered: "The Secretary of State of the United States and the Foreign Minister of Russia do not have a confidential conversation about the overthrow of a democratically elected government. I am about to get on the phone and tell everyone I can possibly find that Russia's war aim is the overthrow of the Georgian government." Cited in Asmus, *op.cit.*, p. 182.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations Security Council, "The Situation in Georgia", 63<sup>rd</sup> year, 5953<sup>rd</sup> meeting, S/PV.5953, New York, 10 August 2008. The Russian ambassador's response reads: "sometimes there are occasions when certain leaders are elected by their peoples and come to power [...] and become an obstacle to enabling their own people from emerging from a given situation. In such situations, some leaders take courageous decisions with regard to their political future. [...] But I am encouraged by the fact that [US] Ambassador Khalilzad has referred to this publicly; I suggest that this means that he finds it an interesting idea and that he is ready to place it before the international community for its verdict."

<sup>62</sup> For a detailed list of events and for the following paragraph see Asmus, *op.cit.*, pp. 111-140.

<sup>63</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Membership Action Plan (MAP)", 3 March 2010.

MAP offers no guarantee of future membership in NATO, let alone in the European Union. To be precise, MAP would initiate an open-ended process that anticipates that Georgia and Ukraine will spend many years resolving critical national questions of stability, territorial integrity, institutional capacity, and the resolution of frozen conflicts before making a political decision to pursue NATO membership.<sup>64</sup>

Instead, it seemed that France and particularly Germany were worried about what Russia's reaction would be. German Chancellor Angela Merkel had "publicly registered her opposition to MAP for Georgia – [...] in Moscow as well" and she disagreed with Bush on "the wisdom of embracing Tbilisi closely and the signal that such an embrace would send to the Russians".<sup>65</sup> The fact that Georgia (together with Ukraine) was not granted access to MAP in Bucharest is primarily credited to Germany. Instead, the compromise reached at the Bucharest Summit reads: "We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO",<sup>66</sup> which is an unprecedented formulation granting more than MAP ever would have: a guarantee for future membership.

It is difficult to explain, then, why the countries which most strenuously opposed MAP eventually agreed to such a commitment. Asmus' description of the negotiations suggests that it was the high level of pressure that wore down the heads of states and governments when they negotiated between the plenary sessions.<sup>67</sup> One might also argue that at that moment the Eastern European leaders were simply the better negotiators. Rushing out of the negotiation room, NATO's Assistant Secretary General told the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister right after the decision that "there was no MAP but [...] there was a sentence that might be even worse from the Russian perspective".<sup>68</sup> In other words, it was the discord among European NATO members that led to a final formulation with far-reaching consequences. Georgia, on one hand, was highly disappointed by the declaration because it did not meet Tbilisi's security needs. Saakashvili was convinced that only inclusion in MAP would be

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<sup>64</sup> Jackson, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>65</sup> Asmus, *op.cit.*, pp. 126, 129. Also see "Nato Denies Georgia and Ukraine", *BBC*, 3 April 2008.

<sup>66</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Bucharest Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council", Bucharest, 3 April 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Asmus, *op.cit.*, pp. 131-134.

<sup>68</sup> Even Gordon Brown was confused, reportedly saying to George W. Bush: "I am not sure, what we did here. I know that we did not extend MAP. But I'm not sure we didn't just make them members of NATO." *Ibid.*, p. 134.

able to deter a supposed Russian aggression, and he believed that it was Angela Merkel who had deprived him of it.<sup>69</sup> Russian leaders, on the other hand, were dismayed by the Summit's output. As a first step, Putin quickly made clear that "[t]he emergence of a powerful military bloc at our borders will be seen as a direct threat to Russian security", and "[t]he efficiency of our cooperation will depend on whether NATO members take Russia's interests into account".<sup>70</sup> Only a couple of days later, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov made it crystal-clear: "We will do everything possible to prevent the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to NATO."<sup>71</sup>

Of course, NATO did not cause the war, but it can be argued that the Bucharest results "did affect the start of the war".<sup>72</sup> First, by showing its unwillingness (or inability) to offer the official MAP status to Georgia, NATO sent "a signal that [it] is not going to defend Georgia in case of attack".<sup>73</sup> Second, they demonstrated to Russia that if it wanted to prevent Georgia's NATO accession, it had to react quickly. Although probably neither of the two effects was actually intended by European leaders, their compromise had a major direct impact on the behaviour and the security policies of both conflicting parties. By guaranteeing that Georgia and Ukraine would join NATO, Russia's vital interests were heavily affected. Many believe that the only way to prevent the war would have been to stop Georgia's Western-oriented policies.<sup>74</sup> The Summit's compromise can be perceived as one of the important triggers that eventually led to war. "The Bucharest outcome might not only have failed to deter Moscow; it might even have emboldened it."<sup>75</sup> Through its disunity, Europe had a significant (although a probably unintended) impact on the conflicting parties.

*Case 11:* Even after the signing of the six-point agreement, Russia delayed beginning troop withdrawals until 22 August 2008. In accordance with point five of

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>70</sup> Cited in D. Smith, "The Saakashvili Administration's Reaction to Russian Policies before the 2008 War", in S. Cornell & S. Starr (eds.), *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 2009, p. 126.

<sup>71</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>72</sup> E-mail interview with Georgian Senior Official, *op.cit.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> For example J. Kranz, "Der Kampf um den Frieden und sein besonderer Facilitator: Anmerkungen zur Georgienkrise", *Archiv des Völkerrechts*, vol. 46, 2008, p. 486. According to Georgia's Deputy Prime Minister, one could even doubt that: "Informally, we [...] told Russia that if the price of Georgian freedom, security and independence was NATO membership, we were ready to discuss this in a trilateral format with the West, Russia and Georgia. Saakashvili proposed this to Putin. And Putin replied: 'I am not going to exchange your territories with your foreign policy'." Gotev, *op.cit.*

<sup>75</sup> Asmus, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

the agreement, Russia argued that it needed 'additional security measures' until an international mechanism would deter Georgia from further 'aggression'. Its troops remained even longer within the so-called buffer zones around South Ossetia and Abkhazia, a choice which the EU heavily opposed.<sup>76</sup> Because of the limited overall size of Georgia, the generously defined depth of Russia's buffer zones virtually cut the country in two pieces, with Russian soldiers blocking the main East-West road.<sup>77</sup> During the negotiations of an extended ceasefire agreement on 8 September 2008, the EU offered to deploy a monitoring mission (EUMM) in order to replace the Russian additional security measures. Sarkozy made clear that "cette fois-ci c'est pour annoncer un calendrier de retrait des forces russes sur les lignes d'avant le début des hostilités. Il n'y a pas d'ambiguïté : c'est-à-dire les lignes d'avant le 7 août."<sup>78</sup> However, convincing the Russians that they would be obliged to completely withdraw was everything but an easy task. During the negotiations, the Russian representatives even tried to remove the first part of point five, which dictated their withdrawal behind the lines of 7 August. At that moment, Sarkozy threatened to walk out of the negotiations, and by doing so convinced the Russians that their demands were unacceptable.<sup>79</sup> Although "Moscow only reluctantly agreed to abolish this outer line on the arrival of an EU observer mission in the 'security zone'",<sup>80</sup> the EU successfully deployed its monitors by 1 October 2008 and thus pushed the Russians to leave at least Georgia proper.

Of course, one could argue that the EU monitors are underachievers because they cannot fully live up to their mandate without entering South Ossetia and Abkhazia. But despite today's shortcomings, their deployment played a key role in persuading the Russians to abandon the buffer-zones. By liberating the commercially significant main road, ending the occupation of Georgia proper, and thus helping to stabilise Georgia politically and economically, the EU had a significant and direct impact on the country's vital interests. Moreover, the EU was the only actor capable of doing so: most commentators suggest that if there was any American interest in

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<sup>76</sup> "Of the six points, only two or let's say two and a half, perhaps three, have been implemented", Bernard Kouchner said on 6 September 2008. Cited in Asmus, *op.cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>77</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 1158.

<sup>78</sup> Joint Press Conference of Sarkozy and Saakashvili, *op.cit.*

<sup>79</sup> "Sarkozy got up and said 'We're going. This is not negotiable.'" This threat could be prevented by Medvedev joining the talks and later giving in on the matter. A. Blomfield, "Georgia: French President Nicolas Sarkozy 'Threatened to Walk out' of Russia Talks", *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 September 2008.

<sup>80</sup> Allison, *op.cit.*, p. 1159.

becoming involved in the conflict settlement, this had been impeded by a soon-to-be 'lame-duck' Bush administration, which was worried about undermining John McCain's election campaign and therefore unable to take any political risk.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4. Measuring Political Impact: Results and Criticisms

This paper, and the research on which it is based, shows that the EU and its member states were heavily involved in the whole process of crisis management. Sixteen cases of EFP action have been identified, their outcome has been assessed and categorised – eight of them were presented in detail here. Based on a simplified version of Roy Ginsberg's measure of political impact, the analysis found that EFP actions had nil impact in six cases, marginal impact in two cases, considerable impact in three and significant impact in five cases. Half of EFP actions had considerable or significant impact on the two conflicting parties Russia and Georgia. The EU successfully affected even their vital interests, and changed their behaviour and policies in a number of cases. They are not limited to foreign policy, but also include decisions relevant to internal policies such as police reform and economic policy. Besides these basic findings, the two following conclusions can be drawn from the study.

First, with only two instances taking place before 2008, the annexed table demonstrates that the EU's engagement is very much limited to the actual war and post-war period. Even in spring and early summer 2008 the EU tried to influence the course of events in only four instances. While the conflict in South Ossetia and Abkhazia is almost twenty years old, two-thirds of all cases of EFP action lie within the six-month period during and after the war. These findings strongly support the argument that the EU had been too passive for too long. The International Crisis Group wrote in 2006 that "[t]he EU has shown little willingness to take on direct conflict resolution responsibilities",<sup>82</sup> and not much had changed until the situation started to heat up in the spring of 2008. Of course, questions such as 'Could the EU have avoided the war by sending an earlier monitoring mission?' always entail a good portion of speculation. Given the EU's impact during and after the war, it seems, however, likely that it would have been able to influence the pre-war period more vigorously.

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<sup>81</sup> Asmus, *op.cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>82</sup> International Crisis Group, *op.cit.*, p. 27.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, it became clear that the EU did have a political impact without the use of any kind of coercive means. Obviously, there had been no direct military threat. The only step in the direction of military involvement was Sarkozy's statement "L'Europe est disponible" to send a peacekeeping force to South Ossetia and/or Abkhazia, an offer never seriously considered at the end.<sup>83</sup> But even economic measures were not on the European agenda, with the exception of the brief suspension of PCA negotiations (case 10). Given its low impact, its short duration and the fact that the PCA had yet to come into force, this step can hardly be considered a coercive policy.<sup>84</sup> The research results made clear that this attempt to pressure Russia economically had nil impact. Instead, the EU's approach during the conflict was based fully on soft means such as declarations (case 4), negotiations (cases 6, 8, and 11), diplomatic pressure (case 5), the readiness to deploy an unarmed monitoring mission (case 11) and international agreements (cases 2 and 15). Moreover, by convening the Brussels donors' conference (case 14) and strengthening the ENP through the new Eastern Partnership, the EU had considerable impact on Georgia by applying some of its pre-war foreign policy tools.

#### **4.1 Criticism I: Is Political Impact an End in Itself?**

If it is true that the EU and its member states had such an impressive extent of impact on the conflicting parties, it is hard to avoid the question why Europe was neither able to prevent the bloodshed, nor to defend Georgia's territorial integrity. In other words, although successfully stopping the battle, the EU was not capable of solving the conflict. It is crucial to recall the definition of impact introduced in the first chapter: an international actor has political impact if it succeeds in shaping the policies or interests of other actors. These policies and interests can be shaped for other countries' benefit or their harm. Thus, our definition of political impact is indifferent to political objectives and even to success. This paper has demonstrated that an actor's political impact can even lead to outcomes opposing its initial objectives. For example, by half-heartedly committing NATO to a goal unacceptable for Russia (case 3), the EU seems to have fuelled the conflict and emboldened Russia to act quickly in order to halt Georgia's NATO accession.

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<sup>83</sup> Joint Press Conference of Nicolas Sarkozy and Dmitri Medvedev, Moscow, 12 August 2008.

<sup>84</sup> Whether real economic sanctions would have been feasible depends very much on how one assesses the distribution of dependency between Russia and the EU and has not been discussed here.

Equally, some argue that by successfully preventing Saakashvili from terminating the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) peacekeeping mandate (case 5) the EU weakened the country's position during the subsequent conflict. Thus, one EU official concluded that the EU often had "the wrong kind of impact [...] it is impact without influence",<sup>85</sup> because it does not live up to its objectives.

Indeed, the most powerful actor is certainly the one who achieves all its goals, but is this also a good indicator for political impact? According to this way of reasoning, impact should simply be measured by the extent to which someone reaches its political objectives. It is worth putting this argument to the test: in our study, Russia would have probably performed best because "[t]hey got control of the areas [of South Ossetia and Abkhazia], they got the UN and OSCE out, and they got someone who had an eye on the Georgians" [EUMM].<sup>86</sup> France also achieved its main goals: Saakashvili's government survived, peace had been achieved and a new Cold War had been avoided with EU-Russia relations still on track.<sup>87</sup> Russia thus had to fight a war in order to reach its goals, while France only needed to calm Russia and pressure Georgia. Who had more impact? How can we assess an actor's objectives? Do we take hidden agendas into account? Do countries which aim low have more political impact than those with ambitious goals? Such an approach seems to raise more questions than it is able to answer.

It seems reasonable in the first step to leave the notion of political success out of the analysis. An unambiguous historical example may help to demonstrate this point: during the war in Vietnam (1964-1973), the United States undoubtedly had an impact on Vietnam by leading a major war that left a country devastated and an estimated 2 million people dead.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, the US experienced an unprecedented defeat. Obviously, the EU's record in Georgia is in no way comparable to the Vietnam example, but it demonstrates that political impact and political success are not necessarily associated. So the problem remains: does it make sense to claim significant or considerable political impact for the EU, if it did not even come close to conflict resolution? Political impact without any overall success is hard to defend as a meaningful indicator for the EU's influence in the world. Future research will therefore need to introduce the highly elusive concept of

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<sup>85</sup> Cited in Ginsberg, *op.cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>86</sup> Phone interview with Janne Taalas, *op.cit.*

<sup>87</sup> Asmus, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

<sup>88</sup> R. te Heesen, "Vietnam (Zweiter Indochinakrieg)" [Vietnam (Second Indochina War)], Universität Hamburg, 15 July 2002.

'success' into the equation. For example, after an analysis similar to that performed in this paper (in order to determine the effectiveness of the EU's impact), political success could be assessed in a second step in order to further increase the plausibility of the overall argument.

#### **4.2 Criticism II: the Time Factor**

The war in Georgia is a relatively recent event. This poses a serious problem to the researcher because, when assessing the outcome of EFP actions, one cannot consider possible long-term effects of a particular action. For example, it has been argued that the donors' conference organised by the EU had a considerable impact on Georgia, because it saved the country from economic and political collapse (case 14). However, it is not possible to fully exclude a fall of Saakashvili's government even in the near future, a case in which our argument would be practically invalidated. Equally, the EU's constant call for Russia to reciprocate Georgia's move to more transparency by also concluding memoranda of understanding with EUMM (nil impact, case 16) could theoretically trigger some change in Russian policies or interests in the future. The time factor is particularly problematic when it comes to long-term strategies and projects that may, by definition, unfold their potential only in one year or even in ten years. Suppose the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership allow the Georgian administration to slowly but successfully prepare for EU membership. In such a case, today's assessment would be unable to correctly evaluate the ENP's political impact.

The time factor also points to another challenge that Ginsberg's framework poses to the researcher, namely that some EFP actions might have several outcomes or an outcome may be the result of a number of actions. This means that it becomes not only difficult to link the different events, but also to categorise them properly. Case 8 includes not less than three EFP actions and three outcomes. In the annexed table, they are presented in one single column. This is not due to the fact that they happened all on the same day, but because they are causally interwoven. Of course, the immediate outcome of Sarkozy's negotiations with Medvedev concerning the six-point agreement was Medvedev's consent to the text. Also, the Russian withdrawal that began on 22 August can be considered a direct result of the French President's continued (phone) pressure and his threat to convene an extraordinary Council meeting. In accordance with our framework, this would mean that the negotiations could only be credited with marginal impact, because they

only resulted in a paper (which was not even signed that day), whereas Sarkozy's phone calls would be classified as having had significant impact because they directly resulted in the withdrawal of the Russian troops just a couple of days later. Such a line of argument is hardly convincing. Of course, without the foregoing agreement on the six points, Sarkozy's phone calls would most likely not have been able to trigger a Russian withdrawal, just as the unsigned six-point agreement without any further diplomatic pressure might have failed to affect Russia's military moves. When applying the framework, it is therefore important to carefully weigh causes and effects and to avoid sticking over-rigidly to the table. Some linkages between outputs and outcomes are just not as linear as a one-dimensional row in a table might suggest.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

This paper has investigated to what extent and how the EU had a political impact on the two conflicting parties during the 2008 war in Georgia. It has become clear that in many cases the Union exerted a considerable or significant degree of political impact on both conflicting parties. "Leading European countries played the role of a mediator in this situation; thus they drew international attention and really influenced the settlement of the indirect conflict between the world's strongest military powers. This certainly was a great success for Europe."<sup>89</sup> What is more, it has been shown that Europe was able to influence Russia and Georgia significantly even through purely non-coercive means. The results challenge conventional thought that the EU cannot act as a credible international player unless it builds up more (and first and foremost military) capabilities. This is not to say that military and other coercive means are unnecessary or should generally not be acquired, but the results suggest that they are at least not a precondition for foreign policy to make a difference in world politics. The use of a framework that focuses on concrete outcomes rather than on abstract capabilities has allowed us to measure EU foreign policy impact in the eyes of third parties, i.e. those who experience its impact directly. This constitutes a useful approach in order to cope with the EU as a non-traditional type of foreign policy actor, one which, on occasion, does not necessarily need the same tools and capabilities as traditional nation-states.

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<sup>89</sup> T. Bordachev, "Military Power in the 21st Century: Russia's Military Campaign in Georgia: Military and Political Implications", Moscow, Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies, 2010 (unpublished).

At the same time, the study has also revealed two main shortcomings in Ginsberg's research design. First, a one-dimensional row in our table can sometimes insufficiently reproduce the complex web of causes and effects. Particularly in cases with several actors and highly interwoven relations amongst them, the accuracy of the table concept will decrease. Second, as demonstrated in chapter 4.1, the framework is unable to distinguish political impact from political success. It thus risks assigning the EU the former even where it has clearly failed to achieve the latter. This raises normative questions about the kind of foreign policy the European Union is pursuing: is foreign policy impact a goal in and of itself?

This paper has shown that in half of all cases Europe had a considerable or even significant impact on the conflict in Georgia. Yet, is this enough to shape world politics?

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## ANNEX: Complete list of EFP actions (the cases discussed in this paper are highlighted)

Case	Object	Date	Input or Issue	Output	Outcome	Political Impact
1	Russia, Georgia	1990s	Stabilisation of South Caucasus	EU and Georgia conclude PCA, focus on economic assistance, limited role for EU SR for the Southern Caucasus	Allows Russia to fill the security gap, some indirect influence on Georgia's reform agenda	marginal
2	Georgia	14 Nov 2006	EU to integrate Georgia into Western community	ENP Action Plan commits Georgia to peaceful conflict resolution and 'softer' policies	Georgia launches new policy initiatives, tries to appeal to South Ossetians by 'soft power'	considerable
3	Russia, Georgia	3 April 2008	NATO Bucharest Summit	MAP is vetoed by France and Germany, disunity leads to an unprecedented formulation in summit declaration	Georgia disappointed not to obtain MAP, Russia motivated to act quickly to prevent Georgia's NATO membership	significant
4	Georgia, Russia	12 May 2008	Symbolic support for Georgia	Five EU foreign ministers visit Georgia	Repeated Russian overflights and Georgian frustration about the EU	nil
5	Georgia	25 June 2008	Georgia unhappy with Russian peace-keepers	EU pressures Georgia not to touch the current peacekeeping format	Georgia gives in and does not unilaterally terminate Russia's peacekeeping mandate	significant
6	Georgia, Russia	July 2008	EU to prevent Georgia to take military action	'Steinmeier Plan' and the promise for another meeting in summer in Berlin	Russia refuses 'Steinmeier Plan' and Georgia engages militarily	nil
7	Russia	11 Aug 2008	EU mediation efforts	Sarkozy offers mediation under conditions that (1) there is a truce at the moment of his arrival; (2) Russia does not take Tbilisi	Both conditions fulfilled at Sarkozy's arrival, but truce only temporary	considerable
8	Georgia, Russia	12 Aug 2008	Negotiations on ceasefire  Saakashvili refuses the word 'status'  Russian army still advances, shootings	Sarkozy negotiates six-point agreement with Medvedev and Saakashvili  Sarkozy calls Medvedev to convince him to delete the word 'status'  Sarkozy calls Medvedev for compliance, threatens to convene European Council	Medvedev agrees to six-point agreement  Medvedev gives in, Saakashvili agrees to six-point agreement  Russia starts withdrawal from positions on 22 Aug (except buffer zones)	significant

9	Russia	12 Aug 2008	EU supports Georgia's territorial integrity	Sarkozy defends this point of view at press conference in Moscow  EU and all its member states strongly condemn recognition of 26 Aug	Term of 'territorial integrity' not in six-point agreement, Russia recognises Abkhazia and South Ossetia on 26 Aug  Russia: recognition irreversible, Treaties on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance	nil
10	Russia	1 Sept 2008	Still Russian troops in Georgia	"Until troops have withdrawn to the positions held prior to 7 August, meetings on the negotiation of the Partnership Agreement will be postponed."	Russian troops leave Georgia proper, but heavy reinforcements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia; nonetheless, PCA negotiations are resumed	nil
11	Russia	8 Sept 2008	Russia still occupies buffer-zones	Sarkozy negotiates again in Moscow, threatens to walk out of negotiations, offers to deploy EUMM to replace Russian troops	Russia agrees to withdraw from buffer-zones, EUMM deployed on 1 Oct 2008	significant
12	Russia	8 Sept 2008	EU wants EUMM to be deployed "throughout Georgia"	Clear declarations, but ambiguous agreements & EUMM Joint Action	Russia does not allow EUMM monitors to enter South Ossetia and Abkhazia	nil
13	Georgia, Russia	15 Oct 2008	Geneva talks	EU pushes for launch of international discussions as stipulated by the six-point agreement	Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) is most notable result, some progress on the ground (at least with Abkhazia) but no tangible policy changes	marginal
14	Georgia	22 Oct 2008	Economic downturn in post-war Georgia	EU and World Bank organise donors' conference and raise € 3.4 billion for reconstruction in Georgia	Georgia economically and politically stabilised, Saakashvili government potentially saved from collapse	considerable
15	Georgia	26 Jan 2009	EUMM to increase transparency	Memoranda of understanding on restriction, notification and inspection of Georgian armed forces	Georgia complies, new uniforms, limits on weapons and new ID for police, restriction of movement of armed forces	significant
16	Russia	26 Jan 2009	EUMM cannot monitor South Ossetia and Abkhazia	EUMM calls for Russia to follow Georgia's "brave and unilateral move" to conclude memoranda of understanding and to increase transparency	no reaction	nil

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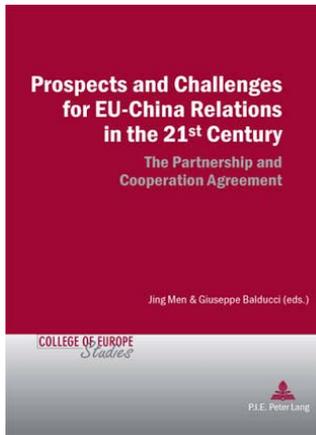
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