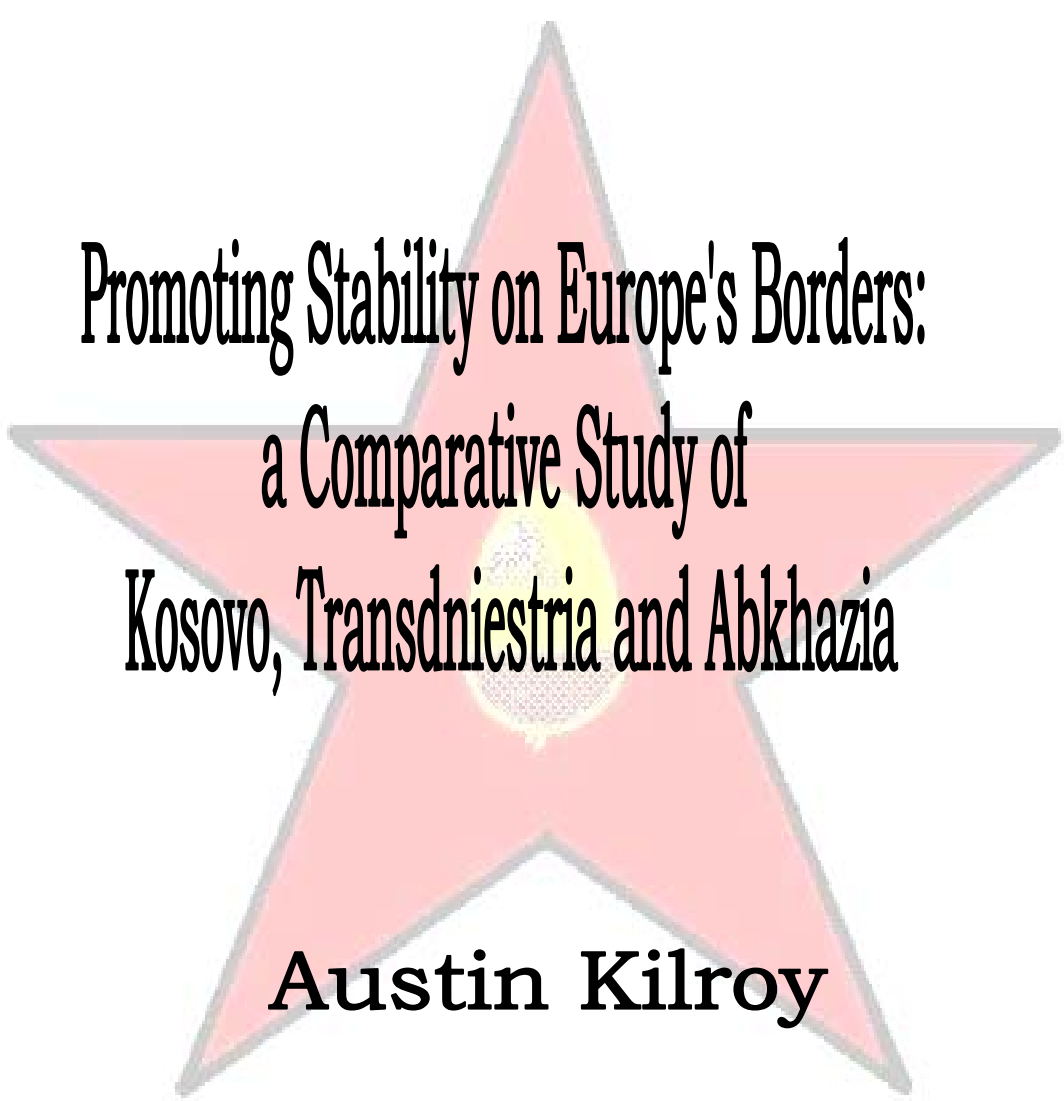


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**Promoting Stability on Europe's Borders:
a Comparative Study of
Kosovo, Transdniestria and Abkhazia**

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Promoting Stability on Europe's Borders: a Comparative Study of Kosovo, Transdnistria and Abkhazia

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Key Points

* **Social divisions:** Where social divisions were created or exacerbated by violence — particularly in Kosovo/Serbia and Abkhazia/Georgia — they have since been entrenched by a lack of contact between both sides and a retreat into historical accusations and stereotypes, without more critical introspection which might soothe tensions. Addressing these social divisions is hindered by the limited range of conflict transformation policies plus a political belligerency which, though unhelpful, is popular with the electorate; thus faith in democracy to soothe these conflicts may be misplaced in the short-term. In Transdnistria/Moldova, where social tensions did not develop, the ability of civil society to exert pressure for change is hindered by state oppression which seeks to preserve its vested interests in the status quo.

* **Economics:** In Kosovo, greater economic prosperity could render social divisions less close to the surface — especially if development was pursued with cross-ethnic 'peacebuilding' objectives in mind too, but growth so far seems to be unsustainable, rather hedonistic, and contributing to arrogance among Kosovar-Albanians. In Moldova and Georgia, economic prosperity could make political agreements much more attractive for Transdnistria and Abkhazia; but the conflicts themselves are making economic prosperity more difficult to achieve — rather a Catch-22 situation — and their continuation is further incentivised by the operation of 'war economies'.

* **Russia:** Motivated by economic gain and a desire for political influence over Moldova and Georgia, Russia's interests are aligned more with the continuation of Abkhazia and Transdnistrian conflicts than with their resolution. Russian fears of a zero-sum game with Europe have actually been fulfilled

by their own blunt policies and pressures, and Moldova and Georgia have been attracted by Europe instead. While such Russian policies continue, Europe must find some way of curtailing economic incentives or making its political displeasure more apparent.

* **International:** Within Kosovo, the international community's engagement with Kosovar-Albanians has been helpful in building institutions, but it may overestimate the ability of EU membership to reduce intolerance within Kosovo and get Serbia to stomach its independence. For Moldova and Georgia, engagement has been less spectacular, and is lamentably constrained by Russian interests as well as other international priorities.

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Promoting Stability on Europe's Borders: a Comparative Study of Kosovo, Transdnestria and Abkhazia

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Introduction

'Stability': what is it?

British interests have been described pithily as “our own security, stability and prosperity”¹ which, as for Europe in general, are partly contingent on the security, stability and prosperity of our neighbours.²

But what is ‘stability’? Various definitions have suggested a state with a Hobbesian monopoly on legitimate violence or, more broadly, a state with the ability and willingness to deliver public goods and assist its populations. This paper explores the means of achieving a settlement of conflicts which currently detract from stability. Such conflict dynamics are revealed to be rooted in a complex web of people, organisations, motives and interests. Over recent years, research on conflict dynamics has increased awareness of the extent to which this web spans the policy agenda. Understanding conflict means supplementing an appreciation of political division and ‘grievance’ with that of economic ‘greed’³ — where protagonists may not necessarily aim to ‘win’⁴ but instead to create a lawless environment conducive to profitable activity⁵ — that environment itself perpetuated by agents who are socialised into violence.⁶ This paper examines a number of these themes, with reference to Kosovo/Serbia, Transdnestria/Moldova and Abkhazia/Georgia.

In all three situations, violence is no longer frequent, but conflict dynamics have been preserved (‘frozen conflicts’). The challenge is to reduce such conflict dynamics as well as channel them in a sustainable, ‘stable’, way. The preferred terminology for doing so is to ‘manage’ rather than ‘resolve’ conflicts — this realisation stems particularly from examining the social and economic rather than only political aspects to conflict — and is a theme which I develop in this paper. Most importantly, sustainable ‘stability’ must surely stem from engaging with conflict dynamics rather than simply attending to political agreements.

Report methodology

The aim of this research was to focus on people's daily lives. Staff of international organisations fly-in and travel by private vehicle (often incongruous large white Toyota LandCruisers resented by local people); but during field trips I crossed every border by bus or train and got a much closer view in the process. I lodged with locals and thus experienced the difficulties of daily life that would not have been so apparent had I been staying in hotels.

I have chosen to write up my findings thematically in order to facilitate assimilation: the report looks at conflict dynamics (highlighting social divisions, economics, and international influences where appropriate) and then at ways of changing the conflict dynamics. I hope this gives a good conceptual structure while bringing out the decisive distinctions between each situation.

The report stems from research I undertook to gauge Europe's influence on stability in these places, and so the report is written largely for an international audience. Pointers for changing the conflict dynamics focus on policies for which the international community has responsibility.

Conflict dynamics

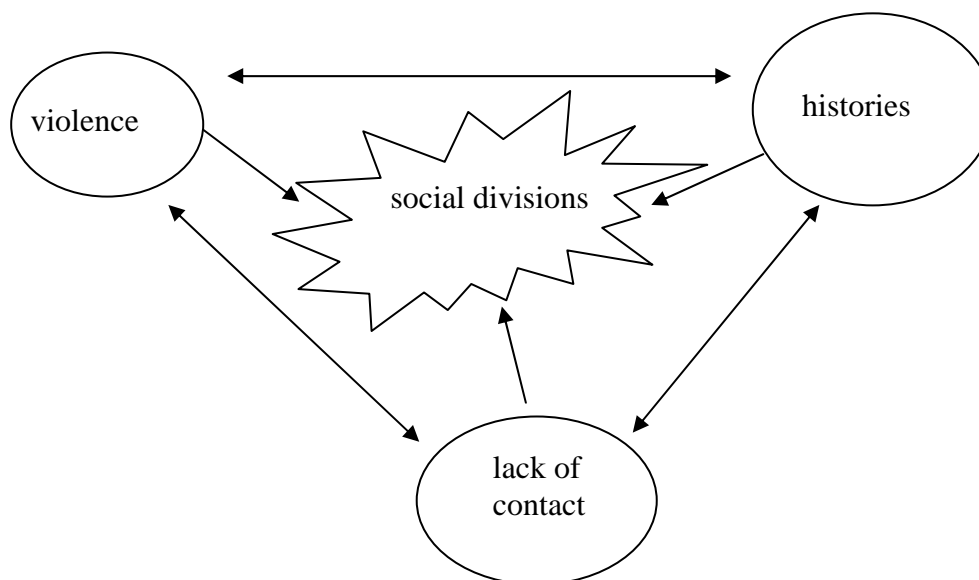
Social division

I want to highlight three factors which created, and then perpetuated, social divisions in Kosovo/Serbia, Transdniestria/Moldova and Abkhazia/Georgia. Violence, and the deep resentment it creates, occurred in varying degrees. That resentment found more fertile ground where conflictual histories had been created, and was more likely to be perpetuated where there was a culture of non-contact between the two sides. I believe social divisions in Kosovo, Transdniestria and Abkhazia are a function of these three factors.

Violence, at its peak, was most pronounced in Abkhazia and Kosovo. In Abkhazia, open warfare began soon after Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze sent the Georgian army into Abkhazia in 1992 to quash its separatist aspirations. Eventually the Abkhaz, with support from Russia and peoples of the northern Caucasus including Chechens, drove out the Georgian army and almost the entire Georgian population of Abkhazia — around 250,000 people, 45% of the population. Many Georgians and Abkhaz had died in the fighting, leaving a legacy of mutual fear and hatred. Since the end of the war, this fear and hatred have been perpetuated by virtually non-existent contact between ordinary Abkhazians and Georgians. Violent stereotypes of the 'other side' have been nurtured in an atmosphere of relative ignorance. Opposing versions of history are inculcated amongst the population on each side: Abkhazians proudly describe the history of their national identity and unique language; Georgians might use historical investigation to refute the very idea of an Abkhaz 'nation'. I am inclined to agree with two commentators who concluded: "invoking the past means that the real questions about the constitution of stable nations are never asked and any real settlement avoided".⁷ Meanwhile daily contact — which might soothe those tensions — is hindered institutionally: it is impossible to make calls to Abkhazian numbers from Georgian phone networks, for example.⁸ When I talked to Georgian and Abkhazian friends about this they both said it wasn't much of a problem since they had no need to call the 'other side' in any case. Ease of movement is severely restricted: no public transport links the two sides, and crossing the border into

Abkhazia involves a walk of perhaps twenty minutes through no-man's land and across the Inguri bridge. While Georgians and NGO-workers have only rarely been prevented from travelling into South Ossetia and Adjara (two other regions of Georgia with separatist ambitions), at least five days' notice and government approval are required to get into Abkhazia.

These influences on social division are not sequential: all three struck me as impacting on each other and making each other more pronounced.



In Kosovo widespread violence affected both Kosovar-Albanians and -Serbs. This mutual persecution has acted to keep conflictual histories at the forefront of people's consciousness, prompting a continual re-assertion of their own identities. Serbians will tell you that Kosovo has always been part of Serbia: that the very name itself is Serbian for a small bird found only in that geographical area, that the 13th century churches and monasteries found across the province demonstrate ancient Serbian roots, and that it was also the site of the crucial 1389 Ottoman battle which remains so close to the hearts of Serbs. Kosovar-Albanians, by contrast, will tell you they have been the majority in Kosovo but lived under the domination of Serbs. Such identities are themselves built with reference to that persecution, which both sides recite in stories which go back through history, giving rise to two victim mentalities. Kosovar-Albanians recount their persecution under Serb rule; Serbs recount the extraordinarily discriminatory outcome of NATO's intervention which institutionalises Albanian oppression. This psychological mêlée of resentment and conflictual history means both sides nurture violent stereotypes of the 'other' based on fear and — in large part — ignorance, since contact is minimal or non-existent, and so stereotypes can continue.⁹ Even today 'history' continues to be an instrument of conflict: Serbians suspect that an Albanian campaign of destruction which has blown up almost one hundred ancient Serbian churches since June 1999 is a concerted effort to erase the evidence of Serbian habitation in the region through destroying their history.¹⁰

What do these conflict dynamics mean in practice? They mean, for example, that Serbs living in an enclave just five kilometres from Pristina are too scared to go into the city. In Gračanica village in this enclave I met Alexandar and his wife Nadica, both in their mid-30s and owning apartments in Pristina. Neither Alexandar nor Nadica have visited their apartments for two years because they don't feel safe. Meanwhile Alexandar's flat is occupied by an Albanian woman whom he has never

met and who has a forged copy of the ownership papers; Nadica's house was looted and destroyed during 1999, but she repaired it with the help of two international NGO workers, and now rents it out remotely to international NGO staff. In the same village, Gracanica monastery lies on a main road but needs guarding 24-hours a day by KFOR troops to prevent its destruction by Albanians. The pattern is repeated in other Serb 'enclaves' in other parts of Kosovo, which render the territory more like a leopard skin than a contiguous territory. The enclaves are like small islands of Serbia: shops stock almost exclusively Serbian produce, Serbian-language signs are in Cyrillic script, and the Yugoslav dinar is in use (while the rest of Kosovo uses only Euros), plus civil servants' salaries are supplemented by payments from the Serbian government.¹¹ Meanwhile in Kosovar-Albanian areas of Kosovo, the red Albanian flag is ubiquitous, and UNMIK's bilingual Albanian/Serb signs are often spray-painted by locals to hide the Serbian words. All street names in Pristina have been changed to Albanian names since 1999.

Thus ethnic Albanian and Serb inhabitants of Kosovo are living almost completely stratified existences, not coming into contact with — nor having much room in their lives for — the other. There remains a basic unwillingness to empathise with the other side. Kosovar-Albanians discount the significance of persecution suffered by Kosovo-Serbs, despite knowing themselves what daily persecution means. Sometimes the persecution is unacknowledged or wilfully ignored (in legal terms Serbs are "the most privileged minority in Europe," said the Kosovar-Albanian speaker of Parliament in October 2005); by other people it is acknowledged but justified in terms of revenge. Amongst Serbs, there is hardly any recognition of legitimate grievances which fed the Kosovar-Albanians' uprising in the 1990s; Serbs say Kosovar-Albanians had many minority privileges in the 1980s, including their own parliament and Albanian-language schooling, but then began discriminating against Serbs and rejecting Serbian authority.

In Transdnistria the political situation is comparable to Abkhazia and Kosovo on paper — a quasi-state structure controls a separate currency, government, border guards, car licence plates and various other trappings of a state — but social divisions are simply not present in any remotely similar way. Although Moldovan nationalism was one of the key reasons the conflict happened in the first place, prompting the Russian-speaking political class in Transdnistria to fight for separation from Moldova, there is not really a problem of integration amongst Russian-, Ukrainian- and Moldovan-/Romanian-speakers within Moldova and Transdnistria or between them. Lingering nationalism means the Moldovan language is being aggressively promoted in Moldova, and is meanwhile outlawed (in its Latin-script form) in Transdnistria. But contacts between ordinary people on both sides are frequent and comprehensive, and social divisions have not been created. In addition the scale of violence was relatively small: 'only' one thousand people were killed, three thousand injured, and unlike Kosovo and Abkhazia there were not large numbers of displaced persons. While some separatist histories could be found, they are not on the tips of people's tongues to anything like the same extent as in Kosovo or Abkhazia, possibly because people do not feel the isolation, persecution or resentment which causes them to draw on, or entrench, conflictual histories.

So my overriding impression was that, in situations where deep social divisions have arisen — Kosovo and Abkhazia — they have been entrenched since the end of open conflict rather than soothed. Perhaps it is naïve to imagine social divisions can be mended in only a few years: changing attitudes in South Africa, for example, is taking generations. And the main international organisations with political responsibility in Kosovo (UNMIK and the OSCE) claim the situation is improving — e.g. 'you'll now see Serb licence plates in Pristina' or 'you wouldn't be surprised to

hear Serbian in a café', I was told. But in the words of my Serbian friend Milan, 'It's not hard to improve from zero!' and moreover he (a twenty-something well-built male) would still never feel safe going to Pristina.¹² On my own journey in a Kosovar-Serbian minibus, which does the journey every day from Gracanica in Kosovo to Nis in Serbia, I witnessed the driver changing his licence plates to UNMIK ones in order to minimise the danger of driving through Kosovar-Albanian parts of Kosovo. People still get shot on the roads at night for having the wrong licence plates.

Economy

Overview

The importance of economic prosperity in soothing conflict was highlighted by many people I met. They reasoned intuitively that stability is improved when people have "more to lose than gain from crime and violence". This rationalist view is perhaps not the whole story of social conflict, but it seems an important part. If poverty, unemployment and lack of economic opportunities were better addressed in Kosovo, social divisions might be less close to the surface; in Moldova and Georgia, greater prosperity could make political agreements much more attractive for Transdnistria and Abkhazia. This could be the case especially if economic growth was better oriented to cross-ethnic cooperation, promoting 'peacebuilding' too. Meanwhile some of the economic activity which is occurring contributes to a perpetuation of conflict rather than its resolution: this phenomenon is termed 'war economies'¹³, and is present in each situation — Kosovo, Transdnistria and Abkhazia.

Poverty and unemployment: a lack of incentives for peace

Serious opportunities are being missed by Kosovans and internationals alike to boost Kosovo's economic growth. The economic situation in Kosovo looks buoyant owing to hedonistic spending¹⁴ in cities and relentless construction of houses across the countryside, but this kind of growth is artificial and will be temporary: it is supported by remittances from family members working abroad (which will decline as emigrants return), and by the huge number of international staff and organisations in Kosovo (which are gradually moving out). This is an opportunity missed by Kosovans: extra money reverberating around the economy could have been used to invest in productive capacity and build up sustainable enterprises, but economic surveys suggest that consumption and housing construction have been favoured instead.¹⁵

International market-forces have also made life difficult: Kosovo is finding it tough to regain export markets lost to other countries during the war. There is great potential for growth in agricultural industries (such as locally-manufactured fruit juices and milk already on the shelves of Kosovan supermarkets), but exports are held back by uncertainty over final status and the administrative difficulties this brings. Foreign investment is difficult to attract while Kosovo still has an 'unstable' reputation, and domestic investment is expensive since banks charge borrowers interest rates between 11% and 14% (their own business made difficult by uncertainty and low rates of savings deposits). Development loans cannot be made by the World Bank while Kosovo's international status remains in limbo. Meanwhile entrepreneurship is tardy given the psychological legacy of Yugoslav socialism: Kosovans are still tempted to rely on the state.¹⁶ Skillsets suffered across the board in the 1990s when President Milosevic demanded Kosovar-Albanians in state-funded jobs pledge allegiance to the Yugoslav state and replaced those who refused with Serbs. Growth in agriculture presents additional worries, given the

legacy of NATO's use of depleted uranium in its bullets and bombs, the dust of which has a half-life of billions of years, and is highly toxic, if not radioactive.¹⁷

An influx of 30,000 to 40,000 new labour market entrants each year means the need to address these problems is still more urgent:¹⁸ current rates of economic growth are simply not fast enough to absorb them, and much investment has apparently focused on capital-intensive industries (like mining and heavy industry) rather than labour-intensive industries.¹⁹ The service sector (which has been growing very visibly: small shops, retailing, transport operators are sprouting everywhere) might have been promising, but may be close to saturation point already. So unemployment in Kosovo may increase even higher than current estimates of 60%. What implications will this have for state stability when 'final status' can no longer be used as a scapegoat for economic problems? The risks of instability are exacerbated by a 'youth bulge' in the population — the median age in Kosovo is only twenty-five — which numerous studies have suggested is bad for stability, especially if those youths are unemployed. Even now, unemployment is particularly bad in the west of Kosovo, and coincides geographically with the most radical political feelings.²⁰

For Serbs the current economic situation is even worse: they are socially divided from their Kosovar-Albanian neighbours and geographically separated from the rest of Serbia. The Kosovar-Serbs I met complained of sky-high unemployment and completely-flat business activity. 'European Stability Initiative' — an NGO — told me that UNMIK does not even know how many Serbs there are in Kosovo, let alone their geographical distribution north and south of the Ibar, and thus cannot really provide social welfare for them. Meanwhile economic activity is impeded by frequent power cuts and water shortages. During a seven-day stay in Kosovar-Albanian Pristina I witnessed four power cuts, mostly at night, and for several hours each; during three days in northern (Serb) Mitrovica there was a power cut every day, and my host Ivan had water only until 8pm or 10pm, surviving with large numbers of water bottles standing by.²¹

In Moldova and Georgia, by contrast, I noted how continuing poverty and lack of economic opportunities are not so much a catalyst for conflict but rather a factor in reducing political incentives for Transdnistria and Abkhazia. In the 1990s, so few Moldovans had money that many economic exchanges were conducted by barter, or by payments made in cigarettes. Even in 2001, monthly wages in Moldova covered on average only half the 'minimum consumer basket' of goods necessary for survival.²² In 2002 over 40% of the population lived below the absolute poverty line. The Government of Moldova reports that "measured by GDP per capita (US\$542 in 2003), [Moldova] continues to be the last but one among the ex-soviet countries, and the last among the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe".²³ Meanwhile growth which *has* occurred, like in Kosovo, relies significantly on remittances from family members in EU member states: real economic capacity generated domestically is much slower to rise and is Chisinau-centric. And thanks to free-trade policies adopted at the behest of the IMF and international creditors — even in a country known for its agriculture — I noticed that all fruit juice in the shops is imported from Ukraine; meanwhile the markets are awash with Chinese clothes and shoes. Other Moldovan problems include corruption,²⁴ and "a ruling party that tends to assume control over the economy, the media and political institutions at all levels".²⁵ An economically dysfunctional Moldova is simply not attractive for Transdnistria to re-join. Pressure from civil society for political progress on conflict resolution is lacking partly because people have more immediate concerns about how to put food on the table.²⁶

Georgia too has shared the sharp economic decline which followed collapse of the Soviet Union — including hyperinflation, a huge drop in output, prolonged shortages of key commodities, the absence of a social safety net — and its recovery has been hindered by a prolonged energy crisis, the slow pace of political reform and the deep penetration of commercial and political activities by corruption.²⁷ In Soviet times Georgia was renowned for its wine, mineral waters and fruits, plus a buoyant tourist industry; all these are still operating despite Russian embargoes, but, as in Moldova, Georgian economic recovery has been painfully slow. The economic malaise in both Moldova and Georgia is deepened by a crisis of emigration, where around one-fifth of the population (one million people in each country, accounting for 35-40% of the economically active population²⁸) have left since independence. Unlike in Moldova, the populations in Abkhazia and Georgia are very alert to the costs of the conflict and the conflict is a significant feature in domestic politics; but similarly to Moldova economic dysfunction in Georgia means there is an absence of incentives for Abkhazia to seek a solution which involves re-joining it.

Indeed the conflict has created a Catch-22 situation in both Moldova and Georgia, in which economic progress is rendered more difficult by instability, but incentives to resolve the conflict are difficult to create while economic progress is lacking. Conflict has discouraged investment by creating a reputation for 'instability'²⁹ and meanwhile created more practical problems: administrative boundaries have shrunk markets by dividing enterprises on both sides from their suppliers and customers. Moldova and Georgia lose customs revenues from goods imported to Transdnistria and Abkhazia and then smuggled across the border into their own territory. And, as in Moldova (and Kosovo too), Georgian politicians have sometimes used the conflict as an excuse for ongoing problems even when they could be doing more to help.³⁰

The lack of incentives for peace is exacerbated by a situation in which — though sharing the sharp economic decline of Moldova and Georgia — both Abkhazia and Transdnistria can draw on solid foundations for their own prosperity, independently from Moldova and Georgia. In Abkhazia, although the CIS still officially maintains a blockade on its borders,³¹ there is strong potential for Abkhaz per capita income — from mass tourism and high-quality agriculture — to far-outstrip Georgian per capita income in the near to middle future. In Transdnistria, although the government overstates its prosperity in propaganda directed at its own population, the region does retain a strong industrial base from the Soviet era, and may have greater economic potential in the near future compared to Moldova's reliance on agricultural industries.³² Thus in a purely economic sense, Georgia may need Abkhazia and Moldova may need Transdnistria more than the other way around.

War economies

While economic dysfunction decreases the incentives for peace, some of the economic activity that does occur has taken forms which increase the incentives for the status quo to continue. In all three conflicts, a perpetuation of the status quo is made more attractive by the existence of 'war economies' — the benefits of which accrue to powerful individuals and groups who tend to have strong links with (or indeed are) the political leaderships in Kosovo, Serbia, Transdnistria, Moldova, Abkhazia and Georgia. These are clear instances of conflict being perpetuated by institutional structures and personal agency at the same time.

Transdniestria has become the classic case. Perhaps best known internationally for illegal activity, some people refer to Transdniestria as a 'black hole' for smuggling. Substantiating these claims is difficult, partly owing to smuggling being inherently secretive; but those who have investigated it report "considerable direct smuggling through Transdniestria, including, reportedly, oil products (especially fuel), alcohol, food products, and tobacco... huge profits find their way into the pockets of individuals as well as their Russian, Ukrainian, Moldovan and other business partners... This web of illegal economy activity stretches across Transdniestrian, Russian, Ukrainian, Moldovan and other business circles."³³ "Arms production also appears profitable... Five or six Transdniestrian factories are said to be manufacturing various types of pistols, automatic weapons, mortars and missile launchers. Although some of these surely go to [Transdniestrian] forces, most are exported — allegedly often without serial numbers. Although the Moldovan press has repeatedly reported on alleged Transdniestrian arms exports to Abkhazia and Chechnya, these remain unsubstantiated."³⁴ A 're-export' scam has also arisen, whereby businesses exploit a 1996 customs agreement between Moldova and Transdniestria permitting tax- and duty-free import of Transdniestrian-bound goods through Moldovan borders: many of these goods are clandestinely sold in Moldova, where they are consequently much cheaper than legally imported goods.³⁵

Some benefits of these activities accrue to the Transdniestrian political leadership, partly through economic revenue which supports the quasi-state, and partly through shady links with the leadership directly. The same leadership also profits economically from legal businesses — indeed members of the Transdniestrian political leadership control around two-thirds of Transdniestrian companies³⁶ — but would stand to lose both routes to personal enrichment were the political status quo to change. Most notable, for example, is the Sheriff empire owned by President Smirnov's son, which includes the main chain of supermarkets, media and telecommunications firms, a monopoly on petrol stations, a casino in Tiraspol, and even the main football team ('Sheriff Tiraspol'). Some of Transdniestria's other major businesses, though profitable, have been sold for knock-down prices to friends of politicians or politicians themselves; for example, the Ribnitsa Metallurgical Plant was recently sold for \$7.5million despite being worth \$479million.³⁷ Political leaders thus have an interlinked double interest in preserving the status quo: a change would endanger their political appointments and consequently also their value to Transdniestrian businesses. Repression³⁸ and propaganda³⁹ are frequently employed by the leadership to shore up their position.

'War economies' in the other two conflicts are not so spectacular, but seem also to bring an influence on political paths taken. In Kosovo, the status quo benefits a minority of powerful individuals, families and groups on either side of the ethnic divide who "collaborate in smuggling, trafficking, car theft and other illicit activity while maintaining a political and social environment that makes it taboo for ordinary citizens to work together".⁴⁰ Indeed it is possible that these same people have been encouraging instability in order to perpetuate the environment in which they can pursue such criminal activities for profit.⁴¹ Weapons, drugs and women are all reputedly smuggled to, and through, Kosovo; all are profitable industries, and ones which would be much more difficult to pursue if the state apparatus began functioning efficiently. Similarly, in Abkhazia it has been reported that "the ceasefire line along the Inguri river is a lawless zone where Abkhaz and Georgian smugglers run their stolen car, petrol and cigarette trafficking businesses freely and harmoniously".⁴² The head of the Abkhaz Port Authority reputedly has a monopoly on diesel,⁴³ and Abkhazia is apparently one of the routes used to run drugs to Russia.⁴⁴ During the 1990s, "illegal revenue became the principal resource not only of the secessionists, but of all parties, including both the Russian intervention forces and, according to several sources, [Georgian President] Shevardnadze's own

clan".⁴⁵ Thus economic incentives appear to be a feature, to varying degrees, in prolonging all three conflicts.

Russia

The initial wars in Abkhazia, Transdniestria and Kosovo were in some sense phenomena of a post-Cold War world. *Glasnost* ('openness') and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union allowed intra-republic tensions to bubble to the surface in the former two conflicts, and the collapse of Yugoslavia prompted a similar surfacing of tensions in the latter one. The continuation of conflict dynamics in these places — particularly in Transdniestria and Abkhazia — are also phenomena of a world in which continuities of the Cold War remain. In particular, Russian perceptions of international relations as a zero-sum game dictate that Russia is in competition with Europe and the US for influence in regions it still considers its 'near abroad'; its support for Transdniestria and Abkhazia has been premised on their economic value but also their political value as a pressure point to keep Moldova and Georgia in thrall to Russia. Europe has trod relatively carefully in its policies on these two conflicts to avoid offending Russia.

In Transdniestria, beyond overwhelming economic support, Russia has a visible military presence under the cover of CIS 'peacekeeping' troops,⁴⁶ which the Transdniestrian leadership finds so beneficial that it passed a law in 1995 making it 'illegal' for Russia to withdraw them,⁴⁷ and which the Moldovan government finds harmful enough to term them an illegal foreign military occupation.⁴⁸ The negotiating formats Russia has fostered have given *de facto* legitimacy to the Transdniestrian leadership by making them a party to negotiations with the same status as Moldova. Indeed the Transdniestrian government has such close links to Russia that some commentators refer to it as a 'puppet' of Russia.⁴⁹ The truth in that terminology lies in Russia's use of Transdniestria as part of its strategy of exerting pressure on Moldova, but 'puppet' is probably too strong a word given that President Smirnov has used his relationship with Russia when it benefits him but occasionally shuns Russian pressures himself.⁵⁰ However, his room for manoeuvre is severely limited by extreme economic and political dependency: Transdniestria has been permitted by Gazprom (the Russian gas company, the biggest shareholder of which is the Russian state) to amass around \$1 billion in debts for natural gas deliveries — i.e. more than three times Transdniestria's annual GDP⁵¹ — and thus Russia can exert very significant leverage.⁵²

In Abkhazia, the Russian 104th parachute division gave direct support to Abkhazian forces during the war, and close links have subsequently been fostered between Moscow and Sukhumi political elites. More practical support has also been offered: pensions have been substantially supplemented by Russia, the train line between Sukhumi and Russia has been restarted and a daily passenger train travels all the way to/from Moscow (this railway infrastructure remains barred to Georgia), and Abkhazians have even been able to claim Russian passports: 80% of Abkhazians are now also Russian citizens.⁵³ Thus Russia has gained leverage in the conflict to a degree that some commentators judge "from the day the Kremlin decides to settle [the conflict], and takes the role of arbitrator, it will be only a matter of weeks".⁵⁴ In the context of such deep social divisions between Abkhaz and Georgians that is an exaggeration, but Russian influence is certainly very significant.

Both these instances of Russian support for secessionist entities are rather paradoxical — or, to put it bluntly, downright hypocritical — given Russia's affirmations of absolute territorial integrity within its own borders. While denying secession or greater autonomy to significant minorities in Chechnya, Tatarstan,

Dagestan and other regions, Russia has been actively aiding secessionist movements in Moldova and Georgia. How have such policies come into being? First, Russian business interests may be significant in Transdniestria and Abkhazia, with those interests in turn having close links to the Russian political leadership. In Abkhazia, Russian businessmen have invested in mobile phone networks, the purchase or long-term rental of tourist infrastructure, even the planting of 10,000 hectares of hazelnut trees by a chocolate manufacturer.⁵⁵ And members of Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov's family have bought up many of the best hotels in Abkhazia.⁵⁶ In Transdniestria, Russian investments have also been made. More shady links exist too: there is evidence that weapons from Transdniestria — perhaps including some sold by Igor Smirnov's son⁵⁷ — have been sold to Chechen militants fighting Russia, and yet Russia still offers support to the Smirnov regime. One wonders which Russian business interests this benefits and exactly what links they have to the Russian political leadership for such support to continue.

Second, in addition to business interests, Transdniestria and Abkhazia are pressure points by which Russia exerts influence over the former Soviet Union.⁵⁸ That desire seems motivated by nostalgia,⁵⁹ partly by a Realist (zero-sum) conception of international relations where Europe gaining influence in Moldova and Georgia would mean Russian losses,⁶⁰ and partly by demonstrable experience that the political dependence of Moldova and Georgia entails economic benefit for Russia as well as leverage. Thus Transdniestria and Abkhazia have become instrumentally useful for Russia: the promise of resolving those conflicts is held up as the prize for Moldovan or Georgian cooperation.⁶¹ Transdniestria and Abkhazia are also ends in themselves via their value to business interests and as politically significant objects.

Despite these intentions, Russia's aim of maintaining its sphere of influence has backfired spectacularly. Moldova and Georgia have been repelled by Russian heavy-handedness, and in the secessionist entities themselves — which are reliant on and thankful for Russian support — the appeal of Europe and the US is growing, aided by the 'soft power'⁶² of astonishing levels of economic prosperity, and spread through television and word-of-mouth from relatives working in Europe.⁶³ Russian fears of a zero-sum game have actually been fulfilled by their own blunt policies and pressures: Moldova and Georgia came to think they really did have to choose between orienting themselves towards Russia or towards the EU.⁶⁴ In the most spectacular example, Moldovan President Voronin is leader of the Moldovan Communist Party and was elected in 2001 on a pro-Russian anti-Western ticket, but has now made European integration his highest foreign policy goal.⁶⁵ Georgia, has declared its intention to join NATO, is already a member of the Council of Europe, and wants to join the EU.⁶⁶

Changing the conflict dynamics

Social division and political initiatives

Conflict transformation work is being undertaken in all three situations to mend social divisions through dealing with resentment, promoting contact,⁶⁷ and addressing conflictual histories.⁶⁸ This is the traditional work of conflict transformation NGOs, including British-based ones such as International Alert, Conciliation Resources and Saferworld, and has recently been reflected in the work of militaries (such as KFOR's CIMIC programmes, or initiatives undertaken by parts of UNOMIG). But there are several hindrances to this work. I want to highlight three: limited range, language policies and political belligerency.⁶⁹

Limited range

It is notoriously hard to measure the effects of conflict transformation work. It leads to few spectacular political agreements or handshakes on the White House lawn: work goes on at a more subtle and gradual level. But while visiting these regions, I began questioning to what extent the benefits of conflict transformation activities really *do* dissipate around the community and influence social divisions beyond the limited number of people who take part directly in initiatives. I observed meetings in the South Caucasus where 'representatives' from opposing communities have met so many times they now slap each other on the back and greeted each other warmly, while ordinary people from each side would have regarded each other with open hostility. Conflict transformation in that sense is sometimes in danger of becoming an industry in itself, with not enough attention given to spreading the benefits of that work.

Some blame for limited range lies also at the door of organisations handling formal high-level initiatives: despite almost total intransigence during formal negotiations between Moldovan and Transdniestrian or Georgian and Abkhazian political elites, the attention of the OSCE and UNOMIG respectively remains heavily focussed on continuing those activities instead of devoting more resources to a bottom-up approach which tackles social divisions directly.⁷⁰ In Kosovo a similar overemphasis on political initiatives has been embraced by ordinary people themselves, who seem completely fixated by the issue of 'final status' without recognising all the social changes necessary if that status is to work sustainably. (See footnote ⁷¹)

Language and minority policies

In Moldova and Transdniestria, social divisions are not currently a significant feature of the conflict, but the delicate ethnic balance could become more precarious if political leaderships on each side continue pursuing discriminatory language policies. In Moldova, for example, university scholarships are not available to students graduating from Russian-speaking schools; in Transdniestria, it is the Russian language which is promoted at the expense of Moldovan.⁷² Language chauvinism substitutes for genuine cohesive Moldovan or Transdniestrian identities.⁷³ But given the role of language in the conflict dynamics, and the substantial minority population who do not speak Moldovan at all, pragmatism rather than idealism suggests that less purist views on language would be helpful.

In Abkhazia language policies are one instance of a wider problem in which Georgians in Abkhazia are neglected by the Abkhaz government, who meanwhile see Georgians' problems as being unduly privileged by the international community compared to their own. Approximately 45,000 Georgians (more precisely, Mingrelians — one of the constituent groups of 'Georgia', like Swanis from Swaneti, Adjarans from Adjara) have returned to southern Abkhazia after their displacement to Georgia, and are beginning to carve a life for themselves amongst many empty dream villas and some minefields.⁷⁴ This is positive in itself and presents an opportunity to nurture contact between Abkhazians and Mingrelians in a way which could provide an example to the wider Abkhazian and Georgian populations. The Abkhazian authorities have not objected in principle to their return, but have not exactly made life easy for them. General insecurity discourages more from coming back: some 1,500 residents in Gali district are thought to have been killed since the ceasefire as a result of a retaliatory actions by the Abkhazian police and the general lawlessness of the Russian peacekeeping force.⁷⁵ And, causing great

discomfort to returnees, Mingrelians have not been permitted to establish schools in their own languages; their children must attend schooling in either Abkhazian or Russian, even though the establishment of Georgian-speaking schools was promised in the early 1990s⁷⁶ and their absence has now become a matter raised by the UN Secretary-General.⁷⁷ In Abkhazia this seems situated in a general trend of neglect: for example infrastructure in the south, especially the road network, is in a noticeably poorer state than in the north. Even the centrepiece of the town square in Gali — a monument to those who died during a Georgian uprising against the Soviet regime — was destroyed by Abkhaz forces just after the war and has still not been rebuilt. The Abkhaz government defends its language and regional policies on the grounds of very restricted budgets, and it is true that channelling what finances are available to the north could be justified in terms of its tourist potential. But given the sensitivity of the south some more governmental attention and spending would be helpful.⁷⁸

Political belligerency

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's democratic and economically liberal views ensured a good international reception for the 'rose revolution' which unseated Eduard Shevardnadze in 2003; his can-do attitude, policy reforms and anti-corruption drive have won further plaudits. But many Abkhazians — and some Georgians too, particularly intellectual classes — have become disturbed by his belligerent rhetoric towards Abkhazia. In addition to his creation of a patriotic youth organisation, which some Georgian intellectuals have compared to the 'Hitler Youth', Saakashvili and several government ministers have made speeches in which a military solution to the Abkhazian 'problem' is alluded to. Outside commentators have noted such belligerency is preferred to any real attempt amongst Georgian politicians to understand and engage with the needs and desires of Abkhazians. It also wastes the golden opportunity to allay each side's fear of the other that the change of leadership in both Georgia and Abkhazia presented.⁷⁹ This atmosphere has perhaps been boosted by President Saakashvili's success in regaining control of Adjara; as well as firm and vocal support for his policies in general (albeit not war on Abkhazia) from the US and its allies. However it must also be said that such belligerency does not itself detract from Saakashvili's 'democratic' credentials: despite serious concerns about the integrity of the political system in Georgia,⁸⁰ the Georgian government's policy position on Abkhazia *does* seem to represent the views of the population as a whole. In Georgia a sociological survey suggested 31% of the population (and 47% of men) would be willing to use military means to resolve the Abkhazia 'problem',⁸¹ while the idea that such policies would cause more problems than they solve is a minority one held by intellectuals.⁸² Furthermore, a displaced population of 237,000 (UNHCR estimate — in a total population of only 4.7 million), who almost fifteen years after the war are mostly still living in 'holding centres', serve as a constant reminder of the conflict.

In Abkhazia, I spoke to Lasha Zantaria — a young well-educated man who works as a legal clerk and has trained others in conflict transformation techniques — who told me he favours a peaceful resolution to the conflict "but the priority is independence. My father left a good AK-47 in my village and I will fight if it's necessary."⁸³ Thus, as in Kosovo, even if the system became more democratic, the official positions of Georgian and Abkhazian governments would still be absolutely irreconcilable. The exigency then is to convince the Georgian government to become more democratic while being less populist — a rather delicate message!

In Transdniestria, political belligerency has taken the form of outright repression of NGOs and media organisations promoting a plurality of opinion, or simply contact with outside bodies. Even non-politicised links such as EU exchanges of research

and education bodies, or engaging with Transdnestrian socially-minded NGOs, are often met with extreme scepticism and even intimidation from the Transdnestrian leadership.⁸⁴ The reasons are easy to understand once one recognises that increased access to information about the conflict would raise awareness amongst the general population of the vested interests of the political leadership in perpetuating the status quo. In effect the Transdnestrian political leadership is seeking to enforce a total monopoly in the political and information domains. This was brought home to me when I met several NGO, pursuing very valuable social initiatives in Transdnestria: the very first thing they told me was that there is absolutely no political content to their work. This was sometimes reiterated and emphasised several times. I took this as an indication that they feel deeply threatened by what might happen if their work was interpreted to have political implications.⁸⁵ Three court cases have been brought against pro-democracy NGOs, and other socially-valuable ones receiving money from European or US interests are hindered in their activities.⁸⁶ Meanwhile the Transdnestrian government has fostered a counter-revolutionary youth group called 'Proryv' ('Breakthrough'), with the aim of protecting Transdnestria from the 'orange plague' of revolutions elsewhere in the Balkans and the former Soviet Union, and supports many of the 800 NGOs registered in Transdnestria⁸⁷ to keep them closely aligned to the state. Maintaining such a grip on the growth of civil society is advantageous to a regime whose interests are divorced from the population which they claim to represent.

Creating economic incentives for peace

In the section on conflict dynamics, I discussed the need to address economic growth and employment as a means to give people 'more to lose' from a resurgence in violence in Kosovo, and to create incentives for peace agreements in Transdnestria and Abkhazia. Apart from helping facilitate economic growth, Europe could greatly improve the chances for stability by absorbing some of the surplus workforce. Europe faces a labour shortage but is still exercising a very tight immigration policy. The International Crisis Group, for example, recommends the creation of "guest-worker programmes, especially in the EU and Russia, to relieve the pent-up political pressures" in Kosovo.⁸⁸

In addition, for Kosovo, where social divisions are important to the conflict, I saw many opportunities missed to make a more direct link between economics and stability by building in 'peacebuilding' elements to economic development. Major agencies such as the European Agency for Reconstruction are pursuing huge and expensive projects to promote economic growth, citing the connection between prosperity and alleviating conflict dynamics, but strangely missing the opportunity to sooth the conflict during their work by requiring that growth projects incorporate cross-ethnic components.⁸⁹ For example, how might the development of the agricultural industry link Serbian producers back to Albanian consumers or the other way around? Could an Albanian food processing plant take a certain amount of its raw materials from Serbian farmers? In Abkhazia, where social divisions are also a feature, some potential is being explored to link Abkhazians and Georgians through joint development of the large power station in the south of Abkhazia. And if there is something positive to take from the existence of 'war economies', it is perhaps proof that economic initiatives across borders can be powerful enough for supposedly conflicting parties to pull out all the stops to preserve them.

Such policies would require more imagination on the part of policymakers, but admittedly are rendered even more difficult where separatist entities are economically viable without the help of others — for example, agriculture or power for Kosovo, heavy industry for Transdnestria, and tourism for Abkhazia. In that

sense, pursuing such policies would be more a political move than an economic decision, i.e. economic policy as a means to political ends. Similarly politically-motivated would be policies that reduce opportunities for ‘war economies’. Although war economies can be economically harmful — primarily by depriving the state of tax revenues — their main costs have tended to be in terms of incentivising the perpetuation of conflict amongst political and economic elites. For Transdniestria, specific initiatives have already begun to be implemented, following a consensus amongst most external commentators that the opportunities for smuggling and re-export must be reduced: the porous and corrupt land border with Ukraine has begun to be regulated⁹⁰ and the Moldovan authorities are being helped to tighten up control of their internal border with Transdniestria.⁹¹ More controversially, some people have suggested that Europe (and its allies) constrict the ability of Transdniestrian companies to export until political progress is made.⁹² That would open a whole Pandora’s box of questions about political influence over trade and moreover about what legal basis there would be for such sanctions — not to mention the effect on the Transdniestrian population of deliberately-created hardship which sanctions entail.⁹³

In the other two conflicts it is a matter of increasing the capacity and will of state structures to regulate economic activity. It is also a matter of addressing the power structures which emerge during conflict and to some extent have been retained subsequently. If it is not possible to align the incentives of these domestic power-brokers with stability,⁹⁴ then attention needs to be paid to ways of removing them from their power bases.

International community and its leverage

Can outsiders really be expected to understand and engage with conflict issues which have such strong emotive content? Valery Tishkov suggests “a stranger can’t offer a moral interpretation that would be accepted by the conflicting sides. The very fact of being an outsider undermines instead of supporting such an objective view.”⁹⁵ Michael Ignatieff concludes, “the truth, if it is to be believed, must be authored by those who have suffered its consequences”.⁹⁶ But, as Ignatieff goes on to say, “the truth of war is so painful that those who have fought each other rarely if ever sit down to author it together”.⁹⁷ That surely suggests the role for ‘outsiders’: as facilitators in peacebuilding. And where conflict dynamics go wider than social division — where ‘war economies’ and vested interests are also a feature — ‘insiders’ may not have the incentives to ameliorate conflict dynamics without ‘outsiders’ helping to change the structure of the conflict as well as influencing its agents. But how strong is the international community’s leverage on the conflicts? Which parts of the international community are most influential and why? And what has their effect been?

The unprecedented attention given to Kosovo — a huge influx of NGOs, international militaries and bilateral donors and heavy support for the economy — has in aggregate, I believe, contributed to the unrealistic sense of self-confidence (verging on arrogance) which characterises Kosovar-Albanian political views. Somehow we have reached the situation where Kosovar-Albanians are now so complacent about the international presence that “[their] present peace *with the international community* is highly conditional, resting on renewed optimism about imminent movement on final status and upon some progress in consolidation of a sense of ownership of institutions”.⁹⁸ Of course the economic assistance was essential, but it — and perhaps the initial intervention too — should have come with more explicit conditions attached, especially about the responsibility of Kosovar-Albanians to safeguard the rights of other minorities. Equally Kosovo has been granted many of the paraphernalia of statehood — a currency separated from

the Serbian dinar, 'KS' (Kosovo) car licence plates, the Kosovo 'Protection Corps' as a rebranded version of the Kosovo Liberation Army,⁹⁹ and even a special postal service — without making it clear, as enshrined by UN Resolution 1244 by which UNMIK was established, that the involvement of the international community did not prejudge future status. One of the only elements lacking is a national flag: Kosovar-Albanians fly the flag of neighbouring Albania. Ironically this is precisely something separatist which would have been useful for UNMIK to help develop, since it could have demonstrated the international community's opposition to considering Kosovo as part of any 'greater Albania', as many Kosovar-Albanians still like to think.

Kosovo is one of the places Europe aims to influence by use of EU-membership as carrot. But there is a tendency amongst international policymakers to overestimate the political leverage the prospect of EU membership can exert on both Serbia and Kosovo. Serbia has a surprising degree of pro-EU feeling considering the bombing only seven years ago, but still less than all other prospective member states. I doubt if it is strong enough to justify the international community's faith in being able to coax Serbian acceptance for an independent Kosovo in return for firmer commitments from the EU about Serbia's candidature. In my experience, Serb opinions about holding onto Kosovo tend to be a good deal stronger than their aspirations to join the EU. Amongst Kosovar-Albanians, there is overwhelming affection for the USA but a latent mistrust of the EU. In markets across Kosovo Albanian flags and posters are supplemented by American stars-and-stripes, plus perhaps the odd Bill Clinton wallclock, but certainly no blue and yellow EU flags. One of the largest and most important streets in Pristina has been renamed Bill Clinton Boulevard [sic], and a huge portrait of Bill himself smiles down on passing traffic. Meanwhile "Europe" and "the old whore" are phrases sometimes linked together in spoken Albanian (Europe having flirted with Albania but let it down so many times in the past), and a popular song has the lyrics "Europe: time to repay your debt" [to Albania]. France is especially disliked, perceived as having a close relationship with Serbia and, in the minds of some, deliberately sabotaged some of the NATO war effort against Serbia (such as misleading the US into bombing the Chinese embassy), plus deliberately allowing the ethnic cleansing of northern Mitrovica. There is apparently an enthusiasm for EU membership amongst Kosovar-Albanians, but almost exclusively because they think it will bring economic prosperity.¹⁰⁰

For Moldova and Georgia, despite their strong aspirations to join, EU membership may not actually be on the cards,¹⁰¹ and economic engagement has been on a much smaller scale. But European governments have still been able to bring influence to the political process by other means. In Moldova, the focus for international involvement in the conflict is the OSCE, as mediator in the Moldovan-Transdnestrian formal negotiations, with the US and EU as observers. All three routes — the OSCE, US and EU — were used in a moment of drama in 2003, when the OSCE Mission in Moldova engaged in extensive talks with President Voronin over ten days, followed by last-minute phonecalls from the OSCE Chairman and from Javier Solana (the EU's High Representative on Common Foreign and Security Policy)¹⁰² to dissuade Voronin from signing the 'Kozak memorandum' — a Russian initiative which Voronin himself had initiated¹⁰³ — which gave significant powers to Transdnestria and would have preserved the status quo until 2015. However, the EU has not been successful in convincing Russia or Ukraine to be a part of its own initiatives, such as the travel ban on the Transdnestrian leadership. How could the friction between Russian and Western policies be lessened? An OSCE spokesperson suggested the dynamics would be different if Russia began to feel its policies in Transdnestria incur higher costs, particularly in its relations with

Europe. That relies on Europe communicating its displeasure over the current situation on more levels, and through more channels, than is currently the case; and it also relies on Russia feeling that displeasure in more tangible ways, be they economic or political.

In Georgia, as in Moldova, the efficacy of international involvement will be measured in terms of influence not only on the primary conflict parties but also on Russia, which holds many of the important cards. Changing Russia's mind-set about its right to exclusive influence on the 'near abroad' will be a long-term process, and is made more difficult by the evident interests of the US and Europe in the Caucasus, not least the substantial oil and gas reserves of the Caspian Sea. Thus there is perhaps some truth in Russian perceptions of a zero-sum game. As for influencing the conflict parties themselves, such Cold War rivalries — together with the politics of the 'war on terror'¹⁰⁴ — have kept efforts to resolve internal conflicts on the back burner.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore energy projects, most notably the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project, have acted *directly* to increase polarization in the region, by solidifying a strategic alliance among beneficiaries (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, and the United States) while fuelling the creation of an opposing bloc consisting of losers (Russia, Iran, and Armenia).¹⁰⁶ Moreover, as in Kosovo and Moldova also, aspirations to join the European Union are most often expressed in terms of economic prosperity; other parts of the Copenhagen criteria, such as human rights and protection for minorities, are not frequently referenced. Thus both the 'international community's mode of engagement in Georgia, and Georgia's mode of engagement with the 'international community' have come to prioritise other factors over conflict resolution.

Meanwhile UNOMIG — the United Nations Observer Mission In Georgia — to which European member-states contribute a significant proportion of the personnel, is viewed by almost all the local NGOs as a bloated organisation which has outstayed its remit. From UNOMIG's point of view, their continued existence is justified by observer patrols acting as a visible reminder of involvement of the international community, and by their role in facilitating high-level meetings between Georgians and Abkhaz; in addition they are pressing for valuable reforms in Abkhaz public policy, such as Georgian-language schooling and a UN human rights sub-office to be opened in Gali district. But talking to NGOs, and indeed some insiders, the daily patrols in anachronistic armoured vehicles perpetuate the atmosphere of conflict rather than soothe it, and in any case are unnecessary given everyone knows that all heavy weaponry had been removed from the sensitive Inguri border zone since 1993. "Absurd" was one of the words used in reference to UNOMIG's operations. Rumour has it that they continue because UNOMIG staff want to preserve the danger allowance appended to their salary, and that requires retaining the current level of risk classification on their own security matrix. UNOMIG's yearly budget of US\$36.4million¹⁰⁷ seems obscene in the context of the NGOs' struggle to get their much-smaller budgets upheld by donors.

Conclusion

I hope this paper has managed to reveal something of the multiple layers of conflict dynamics in Kosovo, Transdnistria and Abkhazia, as well as the influence on those dynamics of actors further afield. Most importantly, I hope it has given some human voice to the debate. Please feel free to contact the author via CSRC for any further information related to its contents.

Endnotes

¹ PMSU, 2005: 3.

² Javier Solana, the EU's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, outlined this view to the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003: "Neighbours who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organised crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe ... Our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations"—Solana, 2003: 7.

³ e.g. Collier & Hoeffler, 2002.

⁴ Keen, 2003.

⁵ Ballentine, 2004.

⁶ Keen, 2002.

⁷ Damoiseil & Genté, 2004.

⁸ I saw the inconvenience of this myself on the Georgian border. After walking for 20 minutes through no man's land either side of the Inguri river, and finally reaching the small metal huts on the Abkhaz side, an Abkhaz soldier found no paperwork permitting my visit ("bumaga nyeto"), and my elementary Russian could persuade him I was legitimate. I reached for my trusty mobile phone, but found the Georgian cellphone networks still bar calls across this disputed border. So I called back to north-east Hampshire: my mother called my Abkhaz friend, who called her friend the Abkhaz deputy Foreign Minister; he travelled to his office (even on Abkhazian Christmas Day: 7th January) and suddenly the border guards' bakelite phone started ringing. A high-volume argument followed, owing to the poor phone lines rather than aggression, and eventually I was permitted to pass.

⁹ A report of the International Crisis Group, for example, distinguishes between the intolerant attitudes of IDPs (internally displaced persons) and those of residents with prior experience of living with other ethnic groups as neighbours: "A long-time Serb resident fearful of an Albanian attack across the river in July 2004 said, 'Mitrovica citizens will never attack us, because we lived fine together before the war, and now on both sides of the city we are tired of these villagers who came here — we have had enough of them'. Likewise, many Albanian IDPs are convinced it is the Serb IDPs, not their former neighbours, who are blocking their return. Indeed, Crisis Group's interviewing in the north found that Serb IDPs tend automatically to refer to Albanians in derogatory terms mostly avoided by long-term Serb residents."—ICG, 2005b: 14.

¹⁰ "If you want to kill me, come here and kill me," shouted Nadica Nedeljkvic in Gracanica, "why blow up my churches?"

¹¹ For example, a high-school teacher receives €120/month from UNMIK, but a further €200-300/month from the Serbian government.

¹² Milan worked until recently for Belgian Caritas, who saw fit to give him a badge with an international-sounding name when he travelled to Pristina. In any case, for safety, he just drove straight from Leposavic into the gated EAR (European Agency for Reconstruction) compound and back again.

¹³ 'War economies' might be defined as: economic activity — often illegal — which thrives on conflict and often seeks to perpetuate it, in order to preserve the environment in which this illegal but profitable activity can take place.

¹⁴ I could see only two bookshops in Pristina — the capital city which also has a large university — but meanwhile an unbelievable number of clothes shops selling branded clothes and shoes (many of which are fakes, but most of which are still obscenely expensive by the standards of local salaries).

¹⁵ "Money that created an ephemeral boom, including from the Albanian diaspora and donors, tended to be used for construction rather than productive enterprises. Funds from donors, Belgrade and Pristina are divided up informally by local elites. A local businessman commented: Money was badly invested, just like in Bosnia, and not just because much of it ended up lining somebody's pockets, but because of the quality of the projects themselves....[C]onstructing buildings [is]...cheaper and easier to steal money from, while if you invest in production it takes too long, it is too complicated...Donors were only interested in doing something fast and nice, with concrete 'results',"ICG, 2005b: 12

¹⁶ Some initiatives and NGOs such as the Kosovo Enterprise Program are attempting to address this.

¹⁷ It is rumoured that several Italian soldiers stationed in the rural east of Kosovo have succumbed to leukaemia, which perhaps does not bode well for the safety of Kosovan fruit and vegetables.

¹⁸ Owing to high birth-rates and a population bulge reaching 16+, plus large numbers of Kosovar-Albanians returning from exile elsewhere in Europe. These statistics are from the European Stability Initiative.

¹⁹ Furthermore, geographic planning in Kosovo seems to focus on expanding cities, reputedly based on socialist planning preferences rather than realistic predictions of economic bases for urban growth — according to Besa Shahini, of the Kosovar Stability Initiative, who reported that a population of 800,000 is envisaged for Pristina, regardless of economic basis. She also highlighted the risk of older high-rises becoming ghettoised; no provision is being made for maintenance or renovation of those.

²⁰ “[Dukagjini region’s] KLA veteran contingent is several thousand strong. Most are unemployed, as is the burgeoning post-KLA generation of eighteen to 22-year olds that local observers see as more radical and “trigger-happy” than the KLA veterans, anxious for a chance to emulate their war exploits and with no other reference points because of the lack of economic development and jobs... There is a blithe recklessness about political consequences among the young men who indulge in rhetoric about avenging Haradinaj and expelling UNMIK. Enthusiasm for newspapers is low, unless it is their own “war values” weekly Fokusi, or to keep tabs on the “enemy” war values rag... Compared with most other Kosovo towns, Decan has very few internet cafes.” ICG, 2005a: 6-8.

²¹ Discrimination against Serbs has been (unwittingly?) institutionalised by the Kosovo electricity distribution company KEK, which decreed supply would be distributed in areas A, B and C — ‘A’ will have 24-hour access; ‘B’ has five hours on and one hour off; ‘C’ has what remains. People who pay their bills on time are placed in area ‘A’, late-payers are put in ‘B’ and people who don’t pay are put in ‘C’. Serbs, who have had electricity problems for years and haven’t paid their bills are put in area ‘C’ and thus see even less reason to pay their bills, meanwhile receiving precious little electricity (this information from Remi Dourlot, UNMIK).

²² USAID, 2002: 23.

²³ GoM, 2004: 8.

²⁴ For example, a Moldovan girl studying international relations in Bucharest told me of a recent deal done by President Voronin (and his brother, who has a monopoly in the Moldovan wheat industry) to import wheat from Canada for \$1.20/kg while it was available domestically for \$0.20/kg, perhaps as a result of bribery. The Moldovan Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev apparently also has monopolistic control over some industries. Information on these allegations is not available freely, partly because political control is exerted over the media in Moldova.

²⁵ ICG, 2003a: 28.

²⁶ This may sound a surprising judgement but I hope to explain with an example. Before arriving in Moldova, I was astonished to read about the 180° u-turn executed by Moldovan President Voronin, who was elected in 2001 on a pro-Russian anti-Western ticket — campaigning with aggressive vitriol against European organisations and international financial institutions — and was then elected again in 2005 on an anti-Russian pro-Western ticket with great enthusiasm for European organisations. How could the electorate stomach this? Indeed how could one believe in any integrity of the Moldovan demos at all? After talking it through with many Moldovans, I became persuaded by their view that foreign policy is just not deemed important by people suffering such painful poverty: in an unbearable economic situation people vote for whomever they deem most likely to lift them out of poverty; and if he has been inconsistent in foreign policy then so be it.

²⁷ These were the judgements of DfID, 2003: 13-15.

²⁸ That statistic is for Moldova. In Georgia too, statistical and anecdotal evidence suggests that those leaving tend to be “professionals, people with a higher education, and men and women aged between 20 and 50 who could be having children,” (DfID, 2003: 41-42).

²⁹ USAID, 2002: 13.

³⁰ Georgian politicians can “frame numerous issues originating in other problems of state incapacity and economic decline in terms of ‘ethnic tension’, playing on nervousness at the centre over new separatist bids,” claims DfID, 2003: 2-3.

³¹ The blockade is ‘official’, but is not enforced by Russia on Abkhazia’s northern border. Abkhazia is however pressing hard for the blockade on its ports to be lifted: Georgia has

fired on ships attempting to dock at Abkhaz ports, and trade with other countries around the Black Sea is a significant opportunity forgone for Abkhazia. "We want to be a good neighbour," Abkhaz deputy Foreign Minister Maxim Gvinjia told me, "we don't only look towards Russia."

³² Transdniestria's major industries include the Moldovan Metallurgical Plant in Ribnitsa city (which provides between half and two-thirds of Transdniestrian tax revenues), the Cuciurgan Power Station, the KVINT brandy factory, and factories producing small and light weapons—ICG, 2003a: 5.

³³ Perepelitsa, 2001; cited in ICG, 2004: 15.

³⁴ ICG, 2004: 15.

³⁵ This situation resulted from an agreement signed by Moldova and Transdniestria in 1996, which provided for a common customs space between Moldova and Transdniestria, meanwhile establishing joint customs posts at the Ukrainian border, and permitting the use of Moldovan customs stamps and seals by Transdniestrian authorities. Moldova kept its share of the bargain, but Transdniestria did not – meaning that Transdniestrian enterprises could export legally with Moldovan stamps and seals but Moldova never received the taxes. "As Moldova also agreed not to collect taxes and duties on goods with a Transdniestrian destination imported through other Moldovan borders, an extremely profitable re-export business developed. Since DMR authorities apply lower or even no taxes and custom duties on some goods, and producers in the region are exempt from taxes and duties for import of raw materials, huge quantities of goods (far exceeding the demand of the local market) are imported to Transdniestria and re-exported over the uncontrolled internal border to Moldova. They are consequently much cheaper than competing Moldovan goods or goods imported directly to Moldova." (ICG, 2004: 15). "The combined effects of these measures were profitable for Transdniestria but devastating for Moldova. Whereas Transdniestria strengthened control over its own customs space, Moldova lost even more control over the flow of goods, especially excise goods. In 1998, excise goods worth US\$107 million were imported to Moldova, while the volume of excise goods taken through Moldovan customs but declared for Transdniestria amounted to US\$ 475 million. Given that rightbank Moldova has a much larger population – approximately 3.7 million versus 630,000 – most of these goods must have been redirected to Moldova" (ICG, 2003a: 6).

³⁶ Vahl, 2005: 5.

³⁷ According to Nikolai Buchasky, editor of *Chelovek i ego prava* newspaper.

³⁸ A state security apparatus, headed by Vladimir Antyufeyev, "has some 2,000 personnel and includes a special Delta battalion of approximately 150 troops, a Cossack reserve regiment of roughly 200, substantial reserves who can be mobilised from Russia, and perhaps 800 border guards. These forces possess a range of armed vehicles, mortars and small arms. The [security] ministry runs a broad range of activities and investigations against potential opposition leaders, members of political parties, NGOs, journalists, and educators. Individuals demanding to be allowed to write Moldovan (Romanian) in Latin script and teach the Moldovan curriculum in schools have also been singled out for harassment." ICG 157: 12. The interior and defence ministries have significant power too, and a 'People's Militia' has also been formed. I met Nikolai Buchasky, editor of *Chelovek i ego prava* ('Man and his right' — almost the only newspaper in Transdniestria which doesn't swallow the government line), who has had the front door of his home set on fire and acid thrown over his face in the street. He says that he carries on working because it would be more dangerous to stop: people would no longer know what happens to him.

³⁹ The power of the Transdniestrian government over its population is boosted also by more constructive means. A social safety net is preserved to a much greater degree than in Moldova (where pensions are around half the value of those in Transdniestria), and prices for communal services and energy are subsidised—ICG, 2004: 13. But the consensus view of most people outside Transdniestria is that the government there can hold onto to power only through its use of propaganda, its control over the media, and its repression of dissent. Although a round of 'elections' were held in December 2005, the political atmosphere in Transdniestria makes it impossible for these to be considered fair. In 2001, the major opposition party Transdniestrian Unity "was denied registration, its candidates were prevented from running, and its leaders were reportedly 'invited' to meet individually with President Smirnov and his security minister, Antyufeyev. ... In early 2001 the three main

leftist opposition organisations were taken to court. They were banned in December 2001 and February 2002.” ICG, 2004: 7.

⁴⁰ ICG, 2005b: 11.

⁴¹ ICG, 2003c: 10.

⁴² Damoiseil & Genté, 2004.

⁴³ Interview with Izmit, an employee at The Halo Trust.

⁴⁴ According to Closson, 2003. Similarly to the harmful effects of Transdnestrian weapons reaching Chechnya, it is surprising that Russia’s relationship with the Abkhazian leadership has not openly raised these aspects of ‘war economies’ as matters of concern.

⁴⁵ Ranvanyi, 2004.

⁴⁶ It has agreed twice with the OSCE to withdraw them, but has so far only scaled them down.

⁴⁷ “This was tacitly accepted by Russia, since it suited the interests of those Russian political forces who wanted a permanent military base in the region”, ICG, 2004: 5.

⁴⁸ Stratan, 2004.

⁴⁹ e.g. Nantoi, 2005.

⁵⁰ e.g. ICG, 2004: 27.

⁵¹ ICG, 2004: 8.

⁵² Incidentally, Transdnestria’s energy debts may ultimately serve Gazprom well, since the conglomerate wants to purchase the two largest energy plants in Transdnestria and fourteen other recently privatised enterprises. “A debt-for-shares swap may be on the cards that would mean greater Russian co-ownership of Moldova’s energy system and its strategically important industry.” ICG, 2004: 8.

⁵³ Russification has occurred to such an extent that one begins to question whether the Abkhaz alliance with Russia endangers the same national-identity project they hope it will support. But given current relations with Georgia, it is the best of their limited alternatives.

⁵⁴ Cyrille Gloaguen, a researcher at the Institut français de géopolitique, in Damoiseil & Genté, 2004.

⁵⁵ Damoiseil & Genté, 2004.

⁵⁶ Radvanyi, 2004.

⁵⁷ Oazu Nantoi, of the Institute of Public Policy in Chisinau, says he received information that Igor Smirnov’s son was arrested in Moscow with US\$800,000 in cash, received for Transdnestrian arms delivered to Chechnya. This point had been made to President Putin previously: on a visit to Moldova in June 2000, he was presented with a grenade launcher by a Moldovan police officer, procured in Transdnestria for US\$500, and apparently one of a number which were destined for Chechnya.

⁵⁸ ...and indeed a pressure point on the EU too: Russian troops so close to the EU border might be a useful bargaining chip, rather like a less extreme version of missiles in Cuba in the 1960s.

⁵⁹ In Abkhazia, once known as the Russian riviera, miles of beach resorts have names (Gagra, Pitsunda, ...) almost as evocative in the Russian mind as the Crimea; snow-capped mountains rise to 4,000m within sight of beaches, and many valleys are covered with fruit orchards. Transdnestria and Moldova are not quite as scenic, but are still considered by Russian policymakers as their own domain rather than Europe’s.

⁶⁰ The zero-sum conception of politics is reflected in the views of the chief of Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB), who has argued: “Our opponents are steadily and persistently trying to weaken Russian influence in the Commonwealth of Independent States and the international arena as a whole.” The mainstream Russian Council on Foreign and Defence Policy argues similarly: “The EU is more and more on the offensive in its relations with Russia (...) it acts as a tough adversary and competitor.” Cited in Popescu, 2005: 25.

⁶¹ And as more direct pressure points, the presence of Russian troops on Moldovan and Georgian soil means, according to Sergiu Burca of the Euro-Atlantic Association, that the integration of Moldova or Georgia into NATO can go no further. Furthermore, in an extreme situation, if Georgia sent troops into Abkhazia, the fact that around 80% of Abkhazians are now Russian citizens means that Russia would have exactly the pretext it needs to send in its own troops to Abkhazia (and possibly Georgia too) to ‘protect’ its own citizens.

⁶² Nye, 2002.

⁶³ But Russian influence in Transdnestria itself remains strong enough for the EU and US, amongst other political organisations, to be discouraged from being more active in removing the power bases of the Transdnestrian leadership. Nantoi, 2005: 8.

⁶⁴ President Voronin's turn towards the EU is the second time Moldova has turned away from Russia, but Europe and the US missed the opportunity to nurture a relationship the first time. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moldova hoped to get the same treatment as Baltic states — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania — but they had the advantage of a patron — Sweden — already inside the European Community and so their journey to EU membership was sped. Moldova, in contrast, was apparently recognised as a separate state by the US only on condition that it joined the CIS (according to Igor Munteanu).

⁶⁵ *Infotag*, 22 September 2003.

⁶⁶ This movement away from Russia seems to be the trend, but continuing economic dependency means Georgia especially is still not able to stray too far. Georgian energy distribution is largely controlled by Russia, with the Russian company Unified Energy System (UES) buying a 75% share of AES-Telasi, which handles electricity distribution in the Georgian capital; and the winter 2005/6 gas crisis, in which Russian gas pipelines were blown up and Russia was sluggish in repairing them, demonstrated the panic which Russia can easily provoke if the need arises.

⁶⁷ e.g. the Sukhumi Media Club runs media training and commissions programmes produced jointly by Abkhaz and Georgians.

⁶⁸ e.g. Caucasus Dialogue has run workshops for historians from both sides to come together and aim to reconcile their differences.

⁶⁹ The list is not exhaustive; for example, I have not mentioned the influence of broadcast media or press, but wanted to concentrate on factors with which I came into direct contact.

⁷⁰ Attending to such social influences can even have later benefit for the political negotiations themselves, thinks the British Department of International Development, which is working to build civil society in Moldova and Transdniestria with the justification partly resting on the pressure civil society could put on political elites to reach agreement.

⁷¹ For Kosovar-Albanians, independence was the main objective of the war; for Kosovar-Serbs, transitional arrangements since 1999 have left them in an exhausting limbo, and they too want some movement on 'final status'. That myopia is worthy of its own discussion. Some Kosovar-Albanians threaten war if they don't get what is "rightfully theirs" from negotiations; but if Kosovo does become independent Kosovar-Serbs are also at risk of reaching breaking point, and the radical party could win power in Serbia. In addition to displacing efforts to mend social divisions, 'final status' has become the scapegoat for problems which are likely to continue even after that status is resolved. Unemployment in Kosovo is dangerously high; the population remains poor; and the education system is so troubled that Pristina University — the most prestigious in Kosovo — was not functioning when I visited since all the lecturers were on strike for over a month about their low pay (there were also many allegations of corruption in the grading system). Even when these issues are raised, for example in UN Special Envoy Kai Eide's report, the reaction is often one of 'anger' — because criticisms are feared to postpone final status, and because criticism is not yet fully acceptable — rather than prompting people to respond by actually looking at the criticisms. Moreover 'final status', when it comes, will probably bring huge costs for both sides. Kosovar-Albanians will lose economic stimulation as the international presence begins to scale-down, even though this may be compensated by a newfound ease in international trade. Kosovar-Serbs will almost certainly lose in a big way, since 'final status' will be some sort of independence for Kosovo: a sliding scale of 'conditional independence' has been mooted, but all options are likely to involve a separation from Serbia.

⁷² For the Transdniestrian leadership, this also fulfils the handy role of keeping the population oriented towards their sponsor — Russia — rather than Europe.

⁷³ Of course history is also important: the Moldovan language was confined to the role of a kitchen tongue while Moldova was part of the Soviet Union, and Moldovan-speakers still perceive snobbery amongst Russian-speakers about learning their language. Even now, Russian remains the *lingua franca* in Moldova because most Russian-speakers cannot speak Moldovan but almost all Moldovan-speakers can speak Russian; thus many Moldovans perceive nationalist language policies simply as a means of evening-up this discrepancy.

⁷⁴ Statistics from UNDP, 2006: 5. According to British NGO The Halo Trust, southern Abkhazia was previously the most heavily mined area of Abkhazia, but the Trust has so far removed 5,000 hazardous items without any accidents.

⁷⁵ DfID, 2003: 9-10.

⁷⁶ Ascherson, 1996: 255.

⁷⁷ UNOMIG, 2006.

⁷⁸ There are perhaps deeper reasons for neglect: language policies, as in Moldova and Transdnistria, are a cover for Abkhazians' shaky foundations of political control if not national identity. In Abkhazia, the implicit fear of the Abkhaz-dominated government is that an increased number of Georgians would make their legitimacy even more tenuous than at present: before the 1992 war Abkhaz comprised less than 20% of the population in their 'own' country, and thus it may suit the Abkhaz government if the trickle of returnees remains a trickle.

⁷⁹ Previous leaders Eduard Shevardnadze (in Georgia) and Vladislav Ardzinba (in Abkhazia) were intimately associated with the war through their personal involvement in it; new leaders in Georgia and Abkhazia Mikheil Saakashvili and Sergei Bagapsh — the latter even with a symbol of peace in his marriage to a Georgian wife — did not initially have those negative associations.

⁸⁰ ...brought out, for example, in early 2005 by shady circumstances surrounding the 'accidental' death of the Georgian Prime Minister (reportedly from carbon monoxide poisoning in an apartment, but possibly a murder covered-up at high levels of government and state institutions).

⁸¹ ICCN, 2002.

⁸² e.g. Darchiashvili, 2001.

⁸³ Georgians can come back, he said, but only if they want to live in the Republic of Abkhazia — not if they think it should be part of Georgia. I put it to him that democracies permit people to have differing views. He replied that his Georgian neighbour burned their family house, and his father died four years into the war: this is an important matter. Abkhaz deputy Foreign Minister Maxim Gvinjia echoed his sentiments: "We paid a very big price for this [independence], and we are not going to give it up."

⁸⁴ For example, the powerful Transdnistrian Minister of State Security, Vladimir Antyufeyev, has made his views quite clear: "The West, or more exactly the US, considers it timely to liquidate the Transnistrian statehood. The many NGOs are to be used as an instrument of accomplishing a coup d'état (...) Youth are brainwashed (...) For example, students of the Transnistrian State University are invited to international conferences, they receive grants etc ..." – Vladimir Antyufeyev, 'The West decided to liquidate Transnistrian statehood' ('Zapad reshil likvidirovati pridnestovskuju gosuderstvennosti'), *Vremya Novostei* 24 May 2005, <http://www.vremya.ru/2005/89/5/125787.html> in Popescu, 2005: 19.

⁸⁵ That is especially tricky in a situation where conflict dynamics are so pervasive: for example, NGO 'Interaction' has worked on re-integrating 70 women and 30 children returned to Transdnistria after being people-trafficked. But in the process of raising awareness of people-trafficking amongst the population, they will be impinging on the interests of people-traffickers — some of whom are powerful — by making it more difficult for them to find people to traffic. They have not been threatened by anyone yet, but I imagine it is a possibility.

⁸⁶ For example an imaginative scheme set up by NGO 'World Window', where university law students gave free legal advice (drafted by them, signed by their professors) — enabling them to get practice, and clients to get professional advice — received money from the American Bar Association and was then told by the university (after prompting from the state administration) that it could no longer operate from university buildings.

⁸⁷ ...of which perhaps 130 are active.

⁸⁸ ICG, 2003c: ii.

⁸⁹ I am not the first to make this point; for example, see Eavis & Kefford, 2002: 4, 13. In terminology adopted by the British Department for International Development, these organisations have a tendency to 'work around conflict' rather than engaging directly with it — which in the long-term is the only way to ensure projects are truly suited to the context— DfID, 2002: 22, 26.

⁹⁰ On December 1st 2005, an EU Border Assistance Mission began its operation along the Ukrainian border.

⁹¹ e.g. ICG, 2004: 16. My experiences reflected the need for both of these. On travelling between Moldova and Transdnistria I wasn't once checked by Moldovan immigration or customs officials, and on one occasion crossed the border illicitly in the back of an empty minibus because the Transdnistrian official waved through his friend without doing a

thorough check. On travelling from Transdniestria to Ukraine I was locked up in an office by the border guards who demanded US\$35 for an imaginary piece of paperwork I was supposed to have in my possession. (After a lot of arguing, in Russian, including my telling them I crossed the same border three weeks before with no problem, and that it was my fourth time in Transdniestria, they let me jump back on the train as it began moving.)

⁹² The value of trade with Europe is not as high as with Russia, Ukraine or Moldova, but Transdniestrian companies export to Italy, Romania, Greece and Germany. Eleven Transdniestrian companies have established some sort of cooperation with German firms, and eighteen Transdniestrian-German joint ventures were set up in Transdniestria. Direct ties were established between the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Tiraspol and Leipzig (CISR, 2003: 7). So despite the strong anti-European rhetoric of the Transdniestrian government, it “is dependent on the West more than any other authoritarian entity, recognised or unrecognised, in the former Soviet Union.” (Popescu, 2005: 18). Ukraine is also of crucial importance. The Ukrainian government condemns Transdniestrian separatism — partly because it acts to Russify Ukrainian-speakers, and partly through fears about its own territorial disputes in the Crimea, Transcarpathia and Donetsk (ICG, 2004: 9) — but has meanwhile succumbed to a powerful lobby of the Transdniestrian leadership and Ukrainian businessmen to let trade continue. Ukraine’s transport infrastructure, including Odessa port, is key to survival of Transdniestria economy; and most of the goods destined for re-export to Moldova enter Transdniestria through its Ukrainian land border.

⁹³ Easier to defend politically would be the enforcement of earlier agreements on a common customs space, or of Moldovan laws. For example, in September 2004 the EU began to accept steel only if it was cleared by Moldovan customs, and thus began to close opportunities for Ribnitsa steel mill — which provides 50% of the Transdniestria budget — to export in Europe (Popescu, 2005: 31-32). There is great potential for the EU to convince Ukraine to come with it in these measures, but Ukraine in turn reportedly feels let down by the extent of the rapprochement the EU has been willing to give it on other matters, and is thus reluctant to renounce these short-term economic gains in the name of EU-cooperation which is not yet fully realised (Popescu, 2005: 27). Meanwhile, it is unclear if European organisations such as the EU and OSCE have yet formulated contingency plans about providing food for Transdniestrians if these measures — or the removal of a political leadership which is so intimately interwoven with major Transdniestrian enterprises — cause the Transdniestrian economy to collapse (Vahl, 2005: 4-5).

⁹⁴ PMSU, 2005: 8.

⁹⁵ Tishkov, 2001: 51.

⁹⁶ Ignatieff, 1999: 176.

⁹⁷ Ignatieff, 1999: 176.

⁹⁸ ICG, 2005a: i – emphasis added.

⁹⁹ The Kosovo Protection Corps was not intended to have links to the guerrilla organisation the KLA, but it has been well documented that there is a continuity of personnel. Kosovar-Serbs are understandably nervous of living under a national defence force composed of the same people who destroyed their houses and killed their compatriots. On the other hand, the lawlessness which resulted from a disbanded army in Iraq might demonstrate the dangers of that alternative.

¹⁰⁰ Subsidiary obligations — such as protection for minority rights — are not discussed. Meanwhile, in the shorter term, feelings towards UNMIK have deteriorated much since 1999: impatience has grown with the status quo, and Kosovar-Albanians become desperate to govern themselves. Graffiti across Kosovo reads ‘UNMIKOLONISEM’ (in English: UNMIKOLONISERS). Some of this is being fed by Kosovar-Albanian politicians, as a self-serving way to transfer credibility to themselves, even if the OSCE says their rhetoric differs from behind-the-scenes behaviour in which Kosovar-Albanian politicians have told the OSCE and UNMIK “please give us control of the Ministries, but not yet: we’re not ready!” When I suggested that Kosovar-Albanians would not be in a situation anything like as favourable as now without the intervention of the international community (which includes UNMIK, as civil administrators afterwards), I got a response that “We asked for KFOR, not for UNMIK”. This hostility is likely to intensify as ‘final status’ negotiations proceed: many Kosovar-Albanians are opposed to ‘negotiations’ per se, believing they were promised independence back in Rambouillet, and in any case would not accept anything less now.

Amongst Serbs, UNMIK's presence initially met with hostility, being perceived as a dire infringement of Serbs' own sovereignty. Following the widespread destruction of Serb churches and houses by militant Albanians and persecution of Kosovar-Serbs, opinion seems to be swinging towards some police being better than none at all. Kosovar-Serbs now want KFOR to stay, fearing even more serious violence from Kosovar-Albanians were they to leave. Kosovar-Serbs who joined the Kosovo Police Service were initially scolded by their communities, but are increasingly becoming accepted. But these internationally-sponsored organisations will always meet with hostility from Kosovar-Serbs, who view them as instruments and symptoms of their current predicament.

¹⁰¹ Formal EU membership for Moldova may not be a likely possibility, but home affairs policy in Romania means European citizenship might not be far away for millions of Moldovans. Although the days are now over when Moldovans could travel passport-free to Romania, Moldovans can now apply for Romanian citizenship on the basis of their Romanian background. After Romanian accession to the EU in 2007 or 2008, this potentially means millions of Moldovans could be EU citizens even though their country remains outside the EU. The implications for the EU may not be huge: around one million Moldovans are already working illegally in the EU, and this change might just mean they can become legalised. But for Moldova the consequences could be catastrophic. A Moldovan government minister is reputed to have telephoned his Romanian counterpart in panic when the policy was initiated, fearing that he'd wake up one morning to find he was governing a country empty of people! The solution for Moldova is probably not to change the Romanian system, but rather to make Moldova more attractive to stay.

¹⁰² ICG, 2004: 25.

¹⁰³ Motivated by a desire for 'closure' in the conflict, plus a new-found proximity of Russian and Moldovan positions, President Voronin invited the Russian government to start an initiative outside the formal negotiation process, and without the knowledge of the OSCE or Ukraine. The 'Kozak memorandum', as result of this initiative, envisaged an asymmetrical federation for Moldova, with Transdnistria given considerable powers and an over-representation of delegates in the Moldovan upper house, plus the status quo preserved until 2015. Russia pushed for a rapid signing and briefed the media that the initiative enjoyed full OSCE support, even though the OSCE had only recently become aware of its existence (ICG, 2004: 25) President Voronin described the memorandum as realistic and was to sign it on 25th November 2003, but finally changed his mind on the morning of the ceremony, phoning Russian President Putin who was apparently already on the way to his aeroplane in Moscow.

¹⁰⁴ Georgia has, for example, sent a number of troops to support the US led war in Iraq, and has its own military base there.

¹⁰⁵ ICG, 2003b: 4.

¹⁰⁶ DfID, 2003: 8. Georgia is certainly being cemented in one of the blocs — it is an associate member of NATO, a member of the Council of Europe, and aspires to join the EU. That said, there's an irony in the situation that visitors from European countries are still so novel that, as in Moldova, they're treated with great curiosity: I found myself continuously answering questions about where I was from, where I was going, what I was doing in Georgia, and so on.

¹⁰⁷ According to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/bnote.htm>

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