The Role of External Belief Systems in Intractable Conflicts: A Social-Psychological Perspective on Russian and EU Approaches Towards the Georgian/South Ossetian Conflict

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Abstract

This article focuses on the social-psychological dimension of intractable conflicts and the role that relations between external actors’ belief systems may play in this context. A frame analysis of EU and Russian understanding of the Georgian/South Ossetian conflict suggests a disagreement over how to make sense of the conflict and its intractability. What the actors do have in common is to view the conflict as a product of rational state actions and to suggest, albeit contradictory, state-focused solutions. From a social-psychological perspective, the external disagreement is troubling since it neglects the contradictory belief systems on the ground as well as the state-focused solutions are neglecting the conflict’s multifaceted elements. The external actors hence need to understand the role that the relation between their belief systems play in the social-psychological dynamics of the conflict and seek to strategically incorporate this into their conflict resolution efforts.

Introduction

Intractable conflicts and the impact they may have on security and peace have reemerged at the fore of academic and policy debate. In Europe, interest seems to be sparked by the hostilities that resurfaced in Georgia in 2008 and the emergence of the conflict in Ukraine\(^1\). Causes of conflict

intractability have generally been explained from a structural/strategic analysis with a focus on actors’ irrevocable and conflicting interests2. This article goes beyond such analysis and focuses on the social-psychological dimensions, which may hinder a settlement. It will particularly focus on cognitive processes in conflicts, how they lead to belief systems, and the role that relations between external actors’ belief systems may play in conflict resolution efforts. The case of study is the Georgian/South Ossetian conflict and the external actors are the EU and Russia. Via a frame analysis, the article will analyze how the actors make sense of the conflict and eventually compare the two belief systems in order to discuss the implications their interaction may have.

**Theoretical Framework**

Conflict analysis and resolution approaches have been subject to a plethora of transformations over the years3. Initially, the main approach was state-focused, which perceived conflicts, their analysis, and resolutions from the realist understanding of international relations4. Emphasis was hence mainly placed on the state representative track and on a structural analysis of state actors’ rational calculations5. However, in the 1990s, a cosmopolitan approach evolved, which regarded conflicts as more nuanced than merely a product of state actions6. This approach, amongst others, sprouted from a change in international dynamics with e.g. the end of the Cold War’s bi-polar worldview and the ensuing decline in proxy wars7. Essentially the approach recognizes conflicts as complex networks of interconnected dimensions and it dismisses that they can be explained and dealt with by merely pointing at rational state actions and calling for win/win or zero-sum outcomes8. Rather, conflicts should be addressed from multiple levels with a focus on multidisciplinary analysis, preferably comprised of an interplay between theory and practice9. Only by doing so, it is argued, can the multifaceted nature of conflicts be comprehended and sufficiently addressed10. The cosmopolitan approach hence constitutes of a wide variety of perspectives, concepts and theories, utilized on a case-by-case basis. One of these is the social-psychological perspective, which is an emphasis of this article.

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4 Ibid
5 Miall et al. Contemporary Conflict Resolution, 18
7 Ibid
8 Miall et al. Contemporary Conflict Resolution, 36
9 Bercovitch et al. Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-First Century, 8
10 Miall et al. Contemporary Conflict Resolution.
The Social-Psychological Perspective

The social-psychological perspective supplements the traditionally state-focused and structural/strategic analysis of conflicts with social-psychological concepts and findings. It hence acknowledges the importance of rational calculations in conflicts, however, as stated by Kelman, it:

explores the subjective factors that set constraints on rationality. is designed to complement (and not to replace) approaches based on structural or strategic analysis by providing a special lens for viewing international conflict that brings some of its less explored dimensions into focus.

The perspective seeks to explain how and why social-psychological elements occur in conflicts and how these assist in creating barriers towards conflict resolution. Essentially, it views a conflict as a phenomenon where actors perceive their interests to be clashing and from this understanding they choose to act in a specific manner. According to Daniel Bar-Tal, conflicting understandings are related to cognitive processes, which occur when a conflict emerges. When a conflict emerges, actors will try to understand this phenomenon and position themselves within it. They will hence automatically create explanations for e.g. what caused the conflict, who is responsible, what is the opposition seeking, and what steps must be taken to end the conflict. This is a way for individuals and groups to make sense of and systematize what they are witnessing, which cognitively reduces uncertainty since it provides a feeling that they can predict the future and position their own actions and interests accordingly. Cognitive processing hence includes sense-making as well as strategic positioning. From these processes arises a belief system, which is an overarching understanding of the conflict that actors refer to when confronted with conflict-related events. A belief system is

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12 Ibid, 170
13 Ibid, 175
15 Ibid
16 Ibid
18 Ibid
always biased since it is influenced by actors’ world-view, interests, and contexts in which they exist. However, in a conflict, actors may also choose to support another actors’ belief system because they can relate to it and/or because they believe it could benefit their position. Belief systems may furthermore evolve over time because the dynamic processes of conflicts contribute to changing realities. Actors hence refer to belief systems when they try to make sense of occurring events and to position themselves within these events; some – an attack, for example – may be a reaction an actor has decided to engage in based on amongst other its belief. Conflicts are hence two-fold since they are based on and develop from a given belief system, which is equally influenced and reinforced by social events that unfold.

Figure 1: The two-fold dimensions of a conflict.

From a social-psychological perspective, a conflict is therefore an interactive process equally affected by actors’ irrational and rational calculations and the events and contexts that surround them. This also implies that a conflict will rarely progress naturally towards resolution. Rather, distrust will often deepen due to actors’ tendency of relying on contradictory belief systems. The social-psychological perspective hence argues that conflicts are as much struggles over rational interests as they are struggles over understandings.

21 Bar-Tal Daniel.”From intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation”,353
23 Kelman.”A Social-Psychological Approach to Conflict Analysis and Resolution.”,171
25 Ibid
27 Kelman.”A Social-Psychological Approach to Conflict Analysis and Resolution.”,173-4
28 Ibid.,173-4
29 Miall et.al. Contemporary Conflict Resolution.
Intractable Conflicts

Intractable conflicts are simplistically defined as conflicts that have proven exceedingly difficult to resolve. Such conflicts are not ‘irresolvable’ per se, but they tend to exist over a number of years (often decades) and refuse to concede to political settlements. The sources of intractability are difficult to pinpoint and often formed by crosscutting factors. Moreover, a conflict’s root causes may not correspond to the sources of intractability because time and influence from internal and external actors and processes have contributed to the development of the conflict. Hence, the distinction between internal and external dimensions are blurred and rather intractable conflicts tend to be trans-bordering. A number of scholars have sought to pinpoint causes of intractability and the list includes internal political instability, institutionalization of fighting, and the creation of a war economy, which makes parties resistant towards resolution. The focus on external actors in intractable conflicts is often limited to their failed attempt to settle the conflict, how it is in their national interest to sustain a conflict, or how geopolitics contribute to intractability. These causes mainly derive from a structural/strategic analysis of a conflict’s social events and actors. However, according to the social-psychological perspective such analysis may not necessarily highlight all hindrances to a political settlement because it neglects the social-psychological dynamics of intractable conflicts.

The Social-psychological Dynamics of Intractable Conflicts

From a social-psychological perspective, intractable conflicts are intractable because they are constituted of “intense social-psychological dynamics”, which makes them unresponsive to purely structural approaches. As mentioned earlier, belief systems are created in all conflicts. However, in intractable conflicts, belief systems are of great importance because they provide a sense of meaning and function as a guiding-line in an illogical and seemingly never-ending context. Furthermore, as

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32 Ibid
33 Ibid
34 Ibid.56
36 Ibid
37 Ibid
39 Bar-Tal."From intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation:Psychological analysis."
time passes, belief systems will inevitably become cemented and institutionalized\textsuperscript{[40]}. Hence, the longer a conflict persists, the more polarized actors become because the continued struggle ensures them that they have understood the situation correctly\textsuperscript{[41]}. Intractable conflicts are thus largely sustained by a struggle between belief systems, which is also termed a ‘radical disagreement’\textsuperscript{[42]}. A radical disagreement is however not an isolated phenomenon between conflict actors\textsuperscript{[43]}. External actors may assist in exacerbating this disagreement by, for instance, siding with the belief system of one of the conflict actors, by failing to comprehend the elements of the disagreement, or by neglecting the existence of it\textsuperscript{[44]}. Furthermore, external actors often tend to impose their own belief systems because, as Ramsbotham states: “Each wants to provide the lens through which the conflict is viewed”\textsuperscript{[45]}

Intractable conflicts emerge from and are sustained by competing understandings between conflict actors, which is a disagreement external actors (often unknowingly) reinforce\textsuperscript{[46]}. There is therefore a need to explore the radical disagreement in intractable conflicts\textsuperscript{[47]}. This is not to force all actors to agree on one belief system, but to promote a “strategic engagement of discourses”, which implies creating an understanding that there are competing belief systems and that strategic changes must be made to include these competing beliefs\textsuperscript{[48]}. Thus, communicative channels can be kept open and assist in paving the way for constructive dialogues regarding a political settlement\textsuperscript{[49]}. In traditional/structural conflict resolution approaches, unravelling a radical disagreement is often seen as irrelevant because it is not competing views which should be in focus, but the rational solution\textsuperscript{[50]}. However, in intractable conflicts, competing belief-systems are of high importance because they are the main social-psychological hindrance towards proceeding with a rational political settlement\textsuperscript{[51]}. Mapping belief systems is a way to understand the conflicting beliefs and their interactions, how these contribute to the development of a conflict’s social events, and a way to explore possibilities for loosening the intertwined social-psychological barriers\textsuperscript{[52]}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{41} Shmueli et.al. “Frame changes and the management of intractable conflicts.”, 209
\item \textsuperscript{42} Bar-Tal. “From intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis.”
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ramsbotham. \textit{Transforming violent conflict: Radical disagreement, dialogue and survival.}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{48} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{49} Ramsbotham. \textit{Transforming violent conflict: Radical disagreement, dialogue and survival.}
\item \textsuperscript{50} Miall et.al. \textit{Contemporary Conflict Resolution}, 57
\item \textsuperscript{51} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
In the context of mapping belief systems, focus has mainly been on conflict actors\textsuperscript{53}, while an analysis of the relationship between external actors’ belief systems is less common. However, if an intractable conflict is trans-bordering, then particularly powerful external actors’ belief systems need to be equally mapped in order to comprehend the potential external social-psychological hindrances towards a political settlement\textsuperscript{54}.

**Frames, Beliefs and Conflicts**

Frames are memory structures that assist actors in organizing and making sense of situations by relating them to a pre-existing understanding of reality\textsuperscript{55}. Frames are hence a part of cognitive processing and assist in constructing and communicating belief systems, which shape and limit an actor’s understanding of a given event\textsuperscript{56}. In the field of social science there are two approaches to framing. One is to view frames as interactional (frames are negotiated and formed in interactions)\textsuperscript{57} or as cognitive formations (frames represent an actor’s belief system)\textsuperscript{58}. There are debates regarding the interaction between these two approaches\textsuperscript{59}. However, from a social-psychological perspective towards a conflict, one could argue that their interaction is inevitable given that conflicts consist of individual belief systems (where cognitive frames preside) and changing social events (where interactional frames take place)\textsuperscript{60}. When referring to ‘frames’ in this analysis, emphasis is on both

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\textsuperscript{53} Demirdöğen,"A Social-Psychological Approach To Conflict Resolution:Interactive Problem Solving."

\textsuperscript{54} Miall et.al. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*,379


\textsuperscript{56} Shmueli et.al."Frame changes and the management of intractable conflicts. ",208

\textsuperscript{57} Tannen, Deborah and Cynthia Wallat."Interactive frames and knowledge schemas in interaction"*Social Psychology Quarterly*.50(1987):205-216,206

\textsuperscript{58} Dewulf."Disentangling approaches to framing in conflict and negotiation research:A meta-paradigmatic perspective.",156

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid,208

\textsuperscript{60} Pinkley, L Robert"Dimensions of conflict frame:Disputant interpretations of conflict."*Journal of applied psychology*.75.2(1990):117-126,117
cognitive and interactional frames because of the ‘fluidity’ between social events and belief systems in conflict contexts. Frames are locatable in written and spoken productions and are often noticeable as repeated patterns. These repeated patterns are, for example, repeated words, key-words, phrases, specific sentence formations, and stereotyped images. Frames can also become apparent in comparisons and justifications towards a given action. Although there are various frames, those most common in the context of a conflict are frames that define the problem, diagnose the causes of the problem, make moral judgments, and suggest treatment. Hence, in the following I will be focusing on:

1) How do the actors define the conflict?
2) How do they diagnose the causes for its intractability?
3) What moral judgments do they have towards the conflict and its actors?
4) What is their suggested approach towards the conflict’s resolution?

By locating these elements, one may acquire an understanding of what kind of belief system the actors rely on when confronted with the conflict. The conflict of study is the Georgian/South Ossetian conflict and the external actors are the European Union (EU) and Russia. The EU and Russia are of interest in this context due to Russia’s role in the region, the EU’s increased focus on its neighborhood, and the differences between the two actors when dealing with the former states of the Soviet Union. The material used will be statements (from 2008 till early 2015) made by representatives of the EU and Russia. These statements will be located in news articles from media such as BBC, The Guardian, New York Times, Russia Today (RT), TASS Russia News Agency, and Russia Direct. The analysis will also include statements located in interviews and press releases from channels such as the European External Action Service, European Parliament, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and documents such as the EU Special Representative’s statement paper, the EU’s Independent Fact-Finding Mission Report on the Georgian conflict, Russia’s Foreign Policy Paper and the statement that then-Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, made following the Russian acknowledgment of South Ossetia.

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62 Ibid
63 Ibid
64 Ibid
The Historical Development of the Conflict

Georgia is an ethnically diverse state consisting, among others, of multiple ethnic groups: ‘Georgians’, ‘Ossetians’, and ‘Abkhazians’.66 Despite their diversity, these groups have mainly lived under the state umbrella of Georgia, though Ossetians and Abkhazians have enjoyed periods of autonomy. South Ossetia has long been a contested area due, among other factors, to differing interpretations of history and territorial affiliation.67 According to a majority of South Ossetians, the area has a historical connection to Russia, as it joined the Russian empire in the 18th century before it was included under Georgia.68 Georgia, however, believes that the Ossetian ancestors first migrated to Georgian territory before Georgia was annexed into the Russian empire.69 Hostile disputes between the two sides nevertheless commenced at the end of the Russian Empire in 1918 and lasted until 1921.70 These hostilities originated from South Ossetia’s resistance towards inclusion under the Georgian state and Georgia’s belief that the Ossetians supported the Bolsheviks, though scholars also draw links to social inequality between the two sides.71 Georgian independence, however, ended in 1921 when the Red Army invaded and included Georgia under Soviet rule.72 During the era of the Soviet Union, Georgia was divided according to its ethnic divisions and three autonomous regions (South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Adzharia) were established within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.73 In late 1980’s, Georgia sought independence from the Soviet Union.74 This, as well as the wish for a unified Georgian national identity, led to distrust amongst the ethnic minorities who saw their autonomy threatened.75 After gaining independence, Georgia adopted various policies towards the minorities, policies which the minorities regarded as confrontational in nature, and eventually South Ossetia demanded self-determination in 1990, which led to hostilities between 1991-1992.76 In 1992, the sides agreed on a Russian mediated ceasefire, and a peacekeeping operation was established consisting of joint Russian/Ossetian/Georgian patrols.77 From 1992-2004, South

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67 Ibid
69 Ibid
70 Ibid
72 Cotter. “Cultural Security Dilemmas and Ethnic Conflict in Georgia.”
73 Ibid
74 Ibid
76 Cotter. “Cultural Security Dilemmas and Ethnic Conflict in Georgia.”
77 Allison, Roy “Russia resurgent? Moscow’s campaign to ‘coerce Georgia to peace’. ” International Affairs. 84.6(2008):1145-1171.1146
78 Ibid
Ossetia/Georgia relations were relatively peaceful and the two sides engaged in trade\textsuperscript{79}. Then in 2003, Georgia experienced the Rose Revolution, which ousted President Eduard Shevardnadze and replaced him with Mikheil Saakashvili\textsuperscript{80}. After his inauguration, Saakashvili became vocal in reclaiming the lost territory of South Ossetia and removing trade links, which he described as official involvement in illegal smuggling\textsuperscript{81}. The Georgian government therefore launched “the war on smuggling” in and around South Ossetia, which led to renewed hostilities in 2004\textsuperscript{82}. In 2008, hostilities arose yet again, and this time included a five-day conflict involving Russia\textsuperscript{83}. There were many arguments for who caused the 2008 hostilities and why Russia got involved,\textsuperscript{84} although the two conflicting sides’ interpretations are\textsuperscript{85}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Georgia: The hostilities were an unprovoked Russian attack towards a western country,
  \item South Ossetia: The hostilities were an unprovoked Georgian attack towards an ethnic minority.
\end{itemize}

There is however a general acceptance in the international community that Georgia initiated the attacks which triggered a Russian counter-attack\textsuperscript{86}. Georgia’s reason for attacking is nevertheless disputed, with some focusing on Russia creating tensions; Saakashvili’s wish to reclaim the territory by force; and a South Ossetian attack towards Georgian peacekeepers, which occurred before Russia’s counter-attack\textsuperscript{87}. The 2008 hostilities also gained international attention because Russia occupied areas of Georgian territory and eventually recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states – a recognition which did not achieve international validity aside from support from smaller countries such as Nicaragua\textsuperscript{88}. Eventually in August 2008, then-French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, together with then-Russian President, Dmitrij Medvedev, agreed on a six-point ceasefire\textsuperscript{89}. Despite the official ceasefire, a final political settlement has yet to be reached\textsuperscript{90}.

\textsuperscript{79}“South Ossetia: The Burden of Recognition.” \textit{International Crisis Group.}


\textsuperscript{81}Ibid

\textsuperscript{82}Ibid


\textsuperscript{84}Welt. “The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict: The Internal Security Dilemma and the 2004 Prelude to the Russo-Georgian War.”,92

\textsuperscript{85}Tuathail, Gearóid Ó.”Russia’s Kosovo: a critical geopolitics of the August 2008 war over South Ossetia.” \textit{Eurasian Geography and Economics.}49.6(2008):670-705,691

\textsuperscript{86}Ibid,670

\textsuperscript{87}“2008 Georgia Russia Conflict Fast Facts.”CNN.

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid

\textsuperscript{89}Tuathail “Russia's Kosovo: A critical geopolitics of the August 2008 war over South Ossetia.”,688

\textsuperscript{90}Jafarova.\textit{Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus: Challenges to International Efforts}.
The Conflict’s Characteristics

Given the complexity of conflicts, they are generally difficult to categorize. The South Ossetia/Georgia conflict is no exception. Rather, the conflict includes intra-state elements such as ethnic tensions and political discrepancy, inter-state elements (namely the tensions between Georgia and Russia), and extra-state elements in the form of Russia’s involvement in South Ossetia. Adding to this is the relationship between South Ossetia and other breakaway regions (Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia), and influences from regional actors, which links all actors into a complex pattern. The conflict is hence trans-bordering, multi-faceted and constitutes of processes which pull the conflict in various directions. A number of practitioners and scholars tend to define it as the Georgia-Russia war, others as the South Ossetian war, and some refer to it as the frozen conflict in Georgia. These categorization discrepancies are problematic, given that categorizations provide the preliminary foundation for who and what should be centralized in the understanding of the conflict, serving as the cognitive foundation for analysis and conflict resolution approaches. Since the conflict historically arose between Ossetians and Georgians in 1918, the conflict will in this article be defined as the Georgian/South Ossetian conflict, with both the EU and Russia defined as ‘external actors’. This is not to undermine Russia’s role in South Ossetia and in the 2008 events, but to highlight the conflict’s epicenter, which is an internal conflict between Georgia/South Ossetia.

Conflicting interests over territory, ethnicity and identity affiliation are often seen as the conflict’s characteristics and the reasons for its intractability. These interpretations focus on South Ossetia’s wish for independence/autonomy; Georgia’s wish to reclaim the South Ossetian territory; Ossetians being ethnically different than Georgians and rather wanting to identify with Russia; and Russia’s interest in reclaiming lost Soviet territory. Besides this, there has been a focus on geopolitics, regional and national interests, such as Russia’s wish to access energy resources in and through the

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91 Miall et.al. Contemporary Conflict Resolution. Cambridge.
94 Coppieters. "The politicisation and securitisation of ethnicity: The case of the Southern Caucasus", 92
95 Amongst other: Antonenko, Oksana(2008)and Mikhelidze, Nona(2009)
97 See theoretical framework page 5-6
99 Ibid
100 Coppieters. "The politicisation and securitisation of ethnicity: The case of the Southern Caucasus”.
101 Allison. "Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to 'coerce Georgia to peace'". International affairs. 84.6(2008):1145-1171.
Russia's wish to ensure dominance of the region; the EU's wish to gain better access to energy vis-a-vis their increasingly visible energy conflict with Russia; Georgia and South Ossetia's strive for establishing or ensuring political legitimacy; Georgia's wish to move towards the EU; South Ossetia's wish to ensure stronger political ties with Russia; and Georgia and Russia's tug-of-war in regards to state sovereignty and security. Scholars highlight these elements differently, although there is a tendency to view them as interrelated rather than incompatible. Also, although the conflict has been defined as frozen there are constant developments, thus complicating efforts to pinpoint the conflict's exact contour and its most pressing issues. The main elements may, however, be laid out in a preliminary conflict mapping:

**Figure 3: Conflict Mapping of the Georgian/South Ossetia Conflict**

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104 Coppéters. "The politicisation and securitisation of ethnicity: The case of the Southern Caucasus."


EU and South Caucasus

In its policies, the EU often portrays the South Caucasus as an area of states who wish to move closer to the EU but who also pose a threat to security and stability with their unresolved conflicts. The EU’s involvement in the South Ossetian/Georgian conflict is therefore part of a larger effort towards ensuring regional stability, and as the EU Special Representative to the South Caucasus stated:

> The upgrading of political relations, increased mobility, and economic integration, are important parts of bringing Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia closer to the EU. By providing reassurance and promoting reform and stability in Georgia, the EU helps to create the foundations for an eventual resolution to the conflicts.

The EU’s engagement in conflicts in the South Caucasus has been limited, and it is mainly after the reemergence of hostilities in Georgia in 2008 and Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 that the EU has begun to focus more intensely on developments in this area. It is also following these developments that the EU’s interest has expanded to include a more active counterbalancing of Russia’s influence in post-Soviet territory. The actions of the EU in the South Ossetian/Georgian conflict include the brokering of a ceasefire, an EU Monitoring Mission, the presence of an EU Special Representative for South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, and funding for conflict resolution efforts. It also included an independent fact-finding mission which sought to locate the causes for the outbreak of the 2008 hostilities and whether there had been

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108 “Statement by the EUSR for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby”, 2


110 “Statement by the EUSR for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby”, 1


112 Ibid


violations of international law.\textsuperscript{116} Besides this, the EU is assisting Georgia with political and economic reforms;\textsuperscript{117} Georgia is part of the Eastern Partnership program, which promotes economic integration and political association with the EU;\textsuperscript{118} and it has signed the Association Agreement, which is an extension of the Eastern Partnership Program and includes a ‘Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement’.\textsuperscript{119}

**Understanding the Conflict and its Intractability**

From the outset there is an inconsistency in the way the EU frames the Georgian/South Ossetian conflict. When it comes to issues of political reforms and EU-Georgia relations, the conflict is framed as an internal, secessionist, conflict because as stated by the EEAS on EU-Georgia relations: “The EU continues to support Georgia’s efforts to overcome the consequences of internal conflicts in Georgia’s breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia dating back to the early 1990s.”\textsuperscript{120}

However, when it comes to Russia-Georgia relations, the conflict is framed as an inter-state conflict, or as the EU Special Representative to the South Caucasus (EUSR) stated: “Two and a half years after the EU-brokered ceasefire, we are still dealing with the consequences of the war between Russia and Georgia, and we are far away from a resolution to the conflict.”\textsuperscript{121}

The EU’s dual categorization (both intra- and inter-state conflict) may have links to the EU’s understanding of the causes for the conflict’s intractability. In searching for these in the EU’s narrative, focus is not so much on the South Ossetian claim for independence in 1990 or on ethnic divisions.\textsuperscript{122} Rather it is on the 2008 hostilities and deteriorating relations between Georgia and Russia prior to the outbreak of hostilities.\textsuperscript{123} There is a particular focus on Russian interests in Georgia: “Russia continued to consolidate its military presence and "borderise" the boundary between Georgia and the breakaway region...taking an increasingly aggressive approach in recent

\textsuperscript{116} IFFMCG.”Independent Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia”.
\textsuperscript{117} EEAS.”EU-Georgia Relations.”European Union External Action.
\textsuperscript{120} EEAS.”EU-Georgia Relations.”European Union External Action.
\textsuperscript{121} “Statement by the EUSR for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby”.OSCE,3
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid,6
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid
months...Georgia's insistence on its territorial integrity and commitment to NATO membership remained red lines for Russia”.

The EU frames Russia as a strong neighbor who seeks to violate the sovereignty of (and inflict its interests on) its neighbor via force or other aggressive approaches. This is furthermore linked to Russia’s influence in South Ossetia: “The EU...reiterates its concern about the continuing Russian military and security related presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.”

Hence, Russia is understood as an actor who creates the intractability because it is coercing Georgia and distancing South Ossetia and Georgia from another. However, when the question of secessionism arises, the conflict is seen as internal, and in this context the EU stresses the illegality of secessionism due to its violation of Georgian sovereignty. As stated by the EUSR: “The EU itself has an interest in engaging Abkhazia and South Ossetia within the framework of the EU’s respect for Georgia's territorial integrity. The EU cannot afford white spots to develop on the map of its immediate neighbourhood”.

Besides a focus on Russia, there is also a focus on how to reunite South Ossetia and Georgia – or specifically how to ensure the territorial integrity of Georgia. This is not only to support a political settlement of the conflict’s territorial element, but also part of an EU interest in avoiding “white spots”, or unstable areas in its neighborhood. Thus the conflict is understood as a secessionist conflict where Russia has imposed itself and now plays a strong role in the breakaway entity, with the effect that Russia is distancing the conflict actors from each other and making the conflict intractable.

Moral Judgments

According to the EU, there is a need for soft power in handling the conflict and hindering Russian influence. The EU bases this soft power on a policy of “non-recognition and engagement”, which implies a certain neutrality, includes the provision of reform assistance in South Ossetia and Georgia,

125 Statement by the EUSR for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby”.OSCE.
127 “Statement by the EUSR for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby”.OSCE.
128 Ibid
129 Ibid
and the creation of various agreements\textsuperscript{130}. However, the neutrality in this is dubious given the stated goals of EU engagement with South Ossetia:

The purpose of engagement with the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is clear: by engaging the entities, the EU can open up these territories, increase its footprint and leverage, provide an alternative perspective to the predominant Russian one, and, ultimately, move closer towards a resolution of the conflicts. In essence this is about doing what the EU does best, namely to use its soft power to nudge societies in the direction of Europe\textsuperscript{131}

Added to this are the worries of Russia providing a similar act because as stated:
“The EU takes this opportunity to reiterate its concern at the Russian Federation’s proposal on a so-called “Draft Treaty on Alliance and Integration”…This would...undermine the security and stability of the region.”\textsuperscript{132}

What is interesting is that the Draft Treaty on Alliance and Integration largely resembles the EU’s Association Agreement and hence the EU’s moral judgment is that Russia is wrong to position itself in the area and the EU is right to offer the area its assistance. What is interesting is the emphasis put on the wish to provide an “alternative perspective”; to “nudge” South Ossetia towards Europe. This implies that the EU is concerned about who gets to integrate South Ossetia over which belief system, or, as the EUSR stated when discussing the EU’s necessitated engagement with South Ossetia: “A policy that seeks to isolate the entities is bound to fail given Russia's role there.”\textsuperscript{133}

There are two main actors present in the EU’s moral judgment towards the conflict. These are Russia and South Ossetia, with the former framed as an actor who is going against the interests of the EU; and the latter an actor who should be persuaded in ‘changing its mind’ and withdrawing back to the original contours of Georgia. Despite this, the EU acknowledges that Georgia initiated the 2008 hostilities, which triggered a Russian counterattack. As stated in the EU independent fact-finding mission report: “On the night of 7 to 8 August 2008, a sustained Georgian artillery attack struck the town of Tskhinvali…In a counter-movement, Russian armed forces, covered by air strikes and by elements of its Black Sea fleet, penetrated deep into Georgia.”\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid
\textsuperscript{131} “Statement by the EUSR for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby”, OSCE, 5
\textsuperscript{132} “EU Statement in Response to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva International Discussions”. OSCE.
\textsuperscript{133} “Statement by the EUSR for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby”. OSCE, 5
\textsuperscript{134} IIFFMCG. “Independent Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia”. BBC, 8
Nevertheless, this acknowledgment is not locatable in other parts of the EU’s framing, and focus rather continues to be on Russia’s actions and the removal of Russian influence.

**Steps Needed for a Conflict Resolution**

The steps needed for a resolution, according to the EU: to assist Georgia and South Ossetia with political and economic reforms, unite the two entities, and secure the territorial integrity of Georgia. As stated in the “Council Joint Action on EUMM Georgia”: “The European Council recalled that a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in Georgia must be based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity recognised by international law.”

Russia is, however, hindering a political settlement and is sustaining the conflict. As stated in a 2009 press release after then-Russian President Medvedev had visited South Ossetia without consent from Georgia: “The EU considers this visit as incompatible with the principle of territorial integrity and is concerned about its effects on the international efforts to stabilise the region.”

The EU hence acquires a two-dimensional conflict resolution focus. The first step is to counteract Russia’s influence in South Ossetia. This can be done by reforming South Ossetia, which will convince it to move closer to Europe and further away from Russia. The second step is to continue assisting Georgia and South Ossetia with reforms, which will provide internal stability and lead to a possibility for reunification. The conflict resolution approach of the EU is therefore dual in nature but state-focused because it places emphasis on state reforms and state relations between Georgia and Russia.

**EU’s Belief-System**

The EU frames the conflict as caused by internal instability (which is somewhat manageable via reform assistance) but which has evolved to include an inter-state element due to the presence and influence of Russia. The moral judgment is that, by being present in South Ossetia and recognising

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the entity, Russia is making the conflict intractable because it is preventing a reunification and pulling the two conflict actors further apart. There is a need to replace Russian influence and belief system, particularly in South Ossetia. This can be done via soft power such as providing assistance and 'convincing' South Ossetia that the European/Georgian belief system is preferable. The steps needed are therefore to reform Georgia and South Ossetia and thereby move them towards Europe, which will make them move further away from Russia, and only after this can final steps towards a political settlement (i.e. reunification) be taken. The EU understands the conflict as one mainly caused by rational state actions and one which should be settled via counteracting this state. The conflict resolution approach of the EU is thus state-focused, namely on the actions of Russia and on ensuring Georgian territorial integrity.

**Russia and South Caucasus**

Russia has long been present in the South Caucasus, with a number of the states in the area having been under the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. Russia also borders with Georgia/South Ossetia, and Georgia and Russia have a history of mostly hostile relations. In terms of the Georgian/South Ossetian conflict, Russia was engaged in establishing the 1992 ceasefire, it continues to be present in Georgia with a peacekeeping mission, and it formed the 2008 ceasefire together with France. Besides this, Russia has since 2002 been distributing Russian passports to South Ossetians, was the first to recognise South Ossetia as a state in 2008 and has since then assisted the entity in its state- and institution-building activities. A number of officials in South Ossetia also either originate from Russia or have strong ties with Russia. The existing agreements between Russia and South Ossetia includes the 2010 “Friendship and Cooperation” agreement where Russia has pledged to assist South Ossetia in protecting their borders, establish dual citizenship for individuals from South Ossetia, and establish military bases on South Ossetian territory. In 2015, Russia and South Ossetia also signed the “Treaty of Alliance and Integration”, which transfers the full control of South Ossetian security and borders to Russia, and includes the creation of a common foreign policy. Russia’s interest in South Ossetia has been explained as a strategic interest in increasing Russia’s regional dominance and power, interest in reestablishing the former Soviet borders, and challenging the West

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139 Welt "The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict: The Internal Security Dilemma and the 2004 Prelude to the Russo-Georgian War." 69
140 Roy, "Russia resurgent? Moscow's campaign to 'coerce Georgia to peace'.", 1146
141 "South Ossetia:The Burden of Recognition." International Crisis Group, 1
142 Ibid, 9
143 Ibid
and the expansion of NATO. Others point to a Russian interest in the natural reserves of Georgia, that Georgia is the transit port for oil and gas, and the wish to keep South Ossetia stable in order to prevent instability, which may spill over and into North Ossetia (Russian territory).

Understanding the Conflict and its Intractability

Russia frames the conflict as an internal, ethnic, conflict, because it focuses on how the people of South Ossetia are distinct from Georgians. Essentially Russia understands the conflict as caused by Georgia who tried to assimilate the Ossetian people but since the Ossetians refused, Georgia started preparing for war. This exposed the Ossetians to a possible genocide and made it inconceivable that Ossetians should continue to adhere to Georgia. As then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev stated:

“Tbilisi made its choice during the night of Aug. 8, 2008. Saakashvili opted for genocide to accomplish his political objectives. By doing so he himself dashed all the hopes for the peaceful coexistence of Ossetians, Abkhazians and Georgians in a single state”

Russia hence frames the conflict as one caused by ethnic tensions and the suppression of a minority by a weak and increasingly hostile state, or as Dmitry Medvedev stated: “There was still a hope that the Georgian leadership would be able to hold its disintegrating country together. But, unfortunately, that was Saakashvili’s crime before his people, before many generations of Georgian people.”

In its framing, Russia largely focuses on the 1991 hostilities between South Ossetia and Georgia. As Dmitry Medvedev stated:

“In 1991, President Gamsakhurdia of Georgia, having proclaimed the motto “Georgia for Georgians” — just think about it! — ordered attacks on the cities of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali. The result then was thousands of killed people, dozens of thousands of refugees and

147 “South Ossetia: The Burden of Recognition.” International Crisis Group, 11
149 Ibid
150 Ibid
devastated villages. And it was Russia who at that time put an end to the eradication of the Abkhaz and Ossetian peoples”152.

Back then, Russia argues, it respected the territory of Georgia by offering mediation and peacekeepers however following the 2008 Georgian attack it became obvious that Georgia continued to have hostile intentions and so Russia saw no other option than to intervene153. As Dmitry Medvedev stated: “This is not a war between Russia and Georgia. This is the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, which we had to interfere in to force Georgia to stop killing people whom they view as their citizens and who at the same time were the citizens of Russia. This was an operation to restore the peace”154.

The role of Russia in the conflict however often takes on a dual character. Because besides focusing on the suppression of Ossetians, Russia also focuses on the security of Russian peacekeepers and citizens155. As Russia stated in EU’s independent fact-finding mission: “The actions taken by the Russian side...were designed to achieve but one goal – to protect the civilian population and the Russian peacekeeping contingent from the unprovoked Georgian aggression”156.

The main reason for Russia’s involvement is hence framed as both a humanitarian action and self-defense157. Nevertheless, despite the initial understanding of the conflict as internal, Russia acknowledged South Ossetia and so it now regards the entity as a state. Therefore, it also frames all activities with South Ossetia as state-to-state relations. As stated in Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept from 2013: “Assistance to the formation of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia as modern democratic states, strengthening of their international positions, ensuring sustainable security and their social and economic recovery remains among Russia’s priorities”158.

This also implies that the cause of intractability should not be found in Georgia-Russia relations but in the hostile relations between the South Ossetian and Georgian state, which needs, as Dmitry Medvedev stated in a joint interview for “Russia Today”:

153 Ibid
155 IIFFMC. “Independent Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia”. BBC
156 Ibid
“Diplomatic efforts, negotiations, and the willingness to listen to one another – these are the necessary prerequisites for resolving these issues.”159

Russia therefore frames the conflict as an internal conflict, which needed external intervention in order to save lives. From this understanding Russia intervened to separate the two sides causing the conflict to develop into an inter-state conflict (between South Ossetia and Georgia as states) and one that continues to be intractable because these two “states” are incapable of reaching a political settlement.

**Moral Judgments and Steps Needed for Conflict Resolution**

When it comes to moral judgments, Russia is focusing on the wrong Georgia did in terms of oppressing the Ossetian people in the 90s and initiating the 2008 hostilities, and the good Russia is doing by establishing the South Ossetian state and ‘separating’ the two conflicting parties160. Russia also validates its actions by comparing its recognition of South Ossetia with the international recognition of Kosovo. As Russian Foreign Ministry, Sergey Lavrov stated prior to the recognition of the Kosovo independence: “We will, without doubt, have to take into account a declaration and recognition of Kosovo independence in connection with the situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia”161. Russia hence compares its actions with actions taken in Kosovo. There is therefore also a tug of war over positioning and here Russia sees itself as morally doing the same thing as ‘the West’ did in Kosovo. Another issue is also the Friendship Agreement which precepts that an attack on South Ossetia is an attack on Russia162. This draws lines to NATO or common security and it becomes obvious that the actions of Russia are often presented as a counter-act to, or compared with, the actions of the West. This is also visible in the creation of the new integration treaty, which resembles the EU Association Agreement. However, although Russia seems to copy the West it nevertheless frames the EU as “foreign guardians” who are protecting a weak state (Georgia) which has chosen to suppress a minority163. There is hence a conflict over how to understand the conflict and a debate over who is right and who is wrong. However, essentially Russia frames the acknowledgement of South Ossetia as an irreversible reality164 and this is linked to the steps Russia sees as necessary for


162 “South Ossetia:The Burden of Recognition.”International Crisis Group;

163 Ibid

164 “Saakashvili deserves tribunal over Ossetia war-Medvedev to RT”.RT.
resolving the conflict. According to Russia, South Ossetian independence is the only way to reach a political settlement and hence Georgia and the international community needs to recognize the sovereignty of South Ossetia. As Dmitry Medvedev stated in his speech after the Russian acknowledgment of South Ossetia: “Russia calls on other states to follow its example. This is not an easy choice to make, but it represents the only possibility to save human lives.”

**Russia’s Belief-System**

Russia frames the conflict as an ethnic conflict caused by Georgia’s repression of the Ossetian minority (which could have led to a genocide) but also as an internal conflict which eventually posed a threat towards Russia and its citizens. Russia’s role in the 2008 hostilities is framed as both a state that reacted in self-defense towards the aggression against its peacekeepers, but also as a humanitarian actor who sought to save the lives of the repressed Ossetians. The moral judgment is that Russia is right in assisting ‘the suppressed people’ and it particularly focuses on the conflicts historical development and compares the 2008 hostilities with the 1991-1992 hostilities. Besides this, Russia compares its behavior to the Wests’ and the acknowledgement of South Ossetia with the acknowledgement of Kosovo, and creates agreements that resembles those created by the EU. However, since Russia has acknowledged South Ossetia it also regards it as a state. Hence, the steps needed for a conflict resolution is for the international community to acknowledge South Ossetia, and then for Georgia and South Ossetia to engage in a constructive dialogue. This derives from an understanding that the resolution of the conflict should be based on ‘keeping the parties separated’ by borders. Russia’s understanding of the conflict and resolution is hence state-focused since it focuses on the actions of Georgia and the permanent establishment of the South Ossetian state.

**External Belief Systems in the Georgian/South Ossetian Conflict**

In the external actors’ framing there is evidently a difference in how they understand the conflict, its intractability, and the steps needed to resolve it. EU understands the conflict as a secessionist conflict caused by e.g. political differences and lack of reforms, which Russia has commandeered and made intractable by assisting in separating South Ossetia from Georgia. According to EU, reunification is possible and essential to the resolution of the conflict, but to ensure this Russia’s influence must be limited and particularly South Ossetia needs to be reformed in order to nudge it towards Europe/Georgia. Russia however understands the conflict as an ethnic conflict and regards its

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intractability as a result of hostile relations between South Ossetia and Georgia. These hostile relations arose from e.g. Georgia’s previous aggressive attempts to unify the country but are also present because Georgians and South Ossetians are ethnically different. According to Russia, the solution is to keep the two conflicting sides separated by borders, to acknowledge South Ossetia as a state, and settle the dispute via state-to-state relations. There is a common understanding between EU and Russia that Georgia initiated the 2008 hostilities. The events before and after the 2008 Georgian attack are nevertheless understood and highlighted differently with Russia focusing on ethnic tensions and the actions of Georgia, and EU focusing on territorial affiliation and the actions of Russia. In their belief-systems, the external actors are hence highlighting some of the conflict’s characteristics, whilst neglecting others. As mentioned, actors will form biased belief-systems around a conflict because they will select and focus on information, which they believe makes sense of the situation and which they think will give them a favorable strategic position. Hence, although they have knowledge of the same events, the external actors’ belief-systems are different because they, both intentionally and unintentionally, have selected different events and characteristics as their reference point for understanding. Both actors are hence via different frames shaping and limiting their understanding of the conflict in order to fit it into their world-view and strategic interests, which has led to a disagreement over which lens the conflict should be viewed from. Despite this, they nevertheless approach the conflict and its resolution from a state-focused perspective. EU e.g. sees the conflict as a result of Russia’s actions, whilst Russia sees it as a result of Georgia’s actions, and EU is trying to ensure Georgian state integrity whilst Russia is trying to ensure South Ossetian sovereignty. Besides this, they both argue for state reforms and stronger state relations, with EU seeking to nudge Georgia and South Ossetia towards EU/Europe, and Russia seeking to nudge South Ossetia towards Russia. The difference is EU treats South Ossetia and Georgia as one state, whilst Russia treats South Ossetia and Georgia as two states. The reason for the state-focused perspective may be because the external actors are trying to make sense of the conflict by fitting it into the traditional conflict resolution approach, which focuses on state actors, rational actions and interests. Hence, although they understand the conflict differently they share the perspective that it is a product of state actions which should be resolved via a state-focused response.

**Implications for the Conflict**

As stated in the theoretical framework, an intractable conflict is intractable because actors do not share the same understanding of the conflict and so they rely on belief-systems, which continue to
generate hostile interactions and mistrust. Hence, there is a need to transform the interaction between actors’ belief-systems in order to remove the main social-psychological hindrance to a political settlement. From this perspective, it is interesting that neither EU nor Russia is seeking to unravel and transform the disagreement between South Ossetia and Georgia. Rather EU seeks to strengthen its own and Georgia’s belief-system that Russia is the hindrance to prosperity and that side-lining Russia is essential to reach a political settlement. Russia on the other hand is strengthening South Ossetia’s belief-system that Georgia is the hindrance to prosperity and South Ossetia’s independence is a pre-requisite for a political settlement. From this hence arises two reflections:

1). The external state-focused perspective may essentially complicate the conflict’s resolution. This is because it limits the external conflict resolution focus to a political settlement over mainly state integrity. This ‘state-lens’ hence neglects the radical disagreement between South Ossetia and Georgia and rather focuses on the actions and interests of the two states: Georgia and Russia. Furthermore, the state-focused solution each external actor suggests are contradictory.

2). EU and Russia’s disagreement is troubling because it creates a disconnected and competitive external approach and confirms Georgia and South Ossetia’s understanding that their struggle is justified. As stated, belief-systems will become cemented over time because it confirms conflict actors that they have interpreted the situation correctly. Hence, the conflict is now largely a conflict held in place by a radical disagreement, which draws roots back to 1918 when the first hostilities arose. Although Russia was visibly present in South Ossetia since 2002, and intervened in 2008, it can be argued that this did not alter the radical disagreement between Georgia and South Ossetia. Rather it merely strengthened Georgia’s already hostile interaction with Russia and strengthened South Ossetia’s understanding that they can rely on Russia. The arrival of EU following 2008 did not change the radical disagreement either because EU is focusing on Russia’s actions and trying to remove Russia’s influence. EU is therefore strengthening Georgia’s understanding that Russia is the problem and South Ossetia’s understanding that only Russia supports their beliefs and interests. Hence, the radical disagreement continues to exist and the external disagreement between EU and Russia is rather accentuating this disagreement by supporting the belief-system of either conflict actor. Essentially, the external disagreement is confirming Georgia and South Ossetia that what they have believed all along is ‘correct’ and that their current position continues to be an essential survival
mechanism for them and for the ensuring of their interests. Hence, the current interaction between the external and internal belief-systems can be seen as follows:

*Figure 4*

![Diagram](image)

Therefore, due to the external actors’ differing understandings and state-focused perspective, they may eventually be contributing to the conflicts intractability because they are neglecting the radical disagreement and are instead assisting in pulling the conflict’s competing belief-systems in different directions according to their own understandings and interests.

**The Way Forward**

Intractable conflicts are complex and the distinction between external and internal dimensions are often blurred. Furthermore, they are largely conflicts between beliefs which continue to create hostile social events, as well as social events reinforce actors’ understanding of the situation. There is therefore a need to explore the radical disagreement, seek to create a more reciprocal and strategic interaction between beliefs which may provide a more suitable foundation for a political settlement. Since the two actors analyzed are external, they may not necessarily see the importance of unravelling the disagreement between their individual belief-systems. Rather if they do engage it is likely in the role as third-party mediators in a discussion about how to deal with unfolding social events. However, as seen in the analysis, the actors nevertheless rely on differing understandings, which feed into the way they approach the conflict. There is therefore a need to address the disagreement between EU and Russia. One way to do this could be to engage the external actors in a dialogue over their beliefs, the interaction between these, and what strategic changes should be made in order to include these competing beliefs into a unified external response. From this, the external actors should then assist actors on the ground in transforming their radical disagreement, which may assist in settling the conflict’s multiple (and not just state) characteristics. The external actors however first-and-foremost have to acknowledge the importance of their individual belief-systems in the conflict. Because
currently this remains unattached to their conflict resolution response because they do not consider it of importance, or as Dmitry Medvedev stated when asked about the West’s understanding of the Georgia/South Ossetia conflict: “I can tell you one thing. France has its own position and so does the EU. These positions are different from ours. We can’t do anything about that, they are just different.”

Unfortunately, it is the differing positions that are in need of scrutiny because they continue to feed into the differing positions on the ground. Hence, if it is merely seen as something, which cannot be solved because “they are just different”, then dialogues both internally and externally will continue down a parallel track of intractability.

**Conclusion**

The Georgian/South Ossetian conflict is as much a conflict sustained by an internal radical disagreement as by a disagreement between external actors’ belief-systems towards the conflict. Although EU and Russia are not the only actors involved, the interaction between their beliefs serves as an example of some of the external social-psychological barriers, which may hinder a political settlement in intractable conflicts. Hence, in order to move closer towards resolution there is a need for all actors to understand the interaction between their beliefs. External actors essentially need to search for common ground based on a strategic engagement of their discourses, before engaging with an intractable conflict and ensure to approach the conflict from more than merely a state-focused perspective. Only by doing this, can they create a unified external response and be better positioned in assisting the conflict actors in transforming their disagreement, which may open up possibilities for continuing towards a political settlement. However, as of now, both EU and Russia are with their individual belief-systems merely tightening a web of already intractable beliefs and so the prospect of resolving the Georgia/South Ossetia conflict remains rather bleak. At least until the day when the external actors decide to not only discuss rational interests but also the social-psychological dimension, which has led to their disagreement and particularly to the Gordian knot, or intractable conflict, which they are trying to solve.

References


