

4.1 Mission Notes

Caucasus and Moldova

At the end of the Cold War, secessionist conflicts broke out in the former Soviet republics of Moldova and Georgia, while Armenia and Azerbaijan were drawn into a war over Nagorno-Karabakh, a region within Azerbaijan with an ethnically Armenian majority that unilaterally declared independence in 1991. None of these wars ended decisively, resulting in a series of internationally-monitored frozen conflicts. While Russian peacekeepers deployed to disputed areas of Georgia and Moldova, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) sent political missions to both countries and the UN dispatched military observers to Abkhazia, the largest secessionist region in Georgia. Since 1992, the OSCE has orchestrated efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. These efforts are led jointly by France, Russia and the US through the “Minsk Process.”

While the European Union (EU) has also engaged in conflict resolution efforts in both Moldova and the Caucasus, political progress has been limited in all cases. Tensions between Russia and Georgia over Abkhazia and the separate secessionist region of South Ossetia culminated in war in 2008. On winning a decisive victory, Russia recognized both secessionist regions as independent states. After a brief period of uncertainty over the international presences in the two regions, the OSCE and UN missions in Georgia both closed at Moscow’s insistence. The UN, OSCE and EU have remained involved in efforts to resolve the Georgian conflict or at least prevent their escalation (*see box*).

The OSCE continues to operate in Armenia and Azerbaijan, including Nagorno-Karabakh,

OSCE Office in Baku

Authorization Date	16 November 1999 (PC.DEC/318)
Start Date	July 2000
Head of Mission	Ambassador Koray Targay (Turkey)
Budget	\$4.0 million (1 January 2011- 31 December 2011)
Strength as of 30 April 2011	International Staff: 15 National Staff: 29

For detailed mission information see p. 286

OSCE Office in Yerevan

Authorization Date	22 July 1999 (PC.DEC/314)
Start Date	February 2000
Head of Mission	Ambassador Sergey Kapinos (Russian Federation)
Budget	\$4.0 million (1 January 2011- 31 December 2011)
Strength as of 30 April 2011	International Staff: 6 National Staff: 46

For detailed mission information see p. 294

and Moldova. The direct political leverage of its missions is limited, but the organization remains central to broader diplomatic efforts to end the frozen conflicts. Russia has indicated a desire to see the Moldovan situation resolved and President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia has also invested personal political capital in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh

Georgia

Since the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, the EU, OSCE and UN have all been active in efforts to maintain stability and find political solutions to the disputes over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This is in spite of the fact that the OSCE and UN missions in Georgia both closed down in 2009 due to differences between Russia and Western powers over the status of the two secessionist regions. The EU maintains a monitoring mission (EUMM) at the invitation of the Georgian government, but this is not able to operate in Abkhazia or South Ossetia.

Two EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) have also been involved in post-war politics. The former EUSR to the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby, had been in office before the war, supported by a small team of police and civilian experts in Georgia. He was replaced in August 2011 by Philippe Lefort, who also doubles as the EUSR for the Crisis in Georgia, replacing Pierre Morel.

Morel and co-chairs from the UN and OSCE oversee efforts to mediate the Georgian conflict in the context of the Geneva Discussions, launched in the wake of the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. The talks bring together representatives of Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia (before the war, the Abkhaz and Ossetian questions had been treated separately). The 16th round of the Geneva Discussions was held on 6-7 June 2011. The discussions have made only limited progress in addressing both political issues and humanitarian concerns.

An earlier round of the Geneva Discussions resulted in a 2009 agreement to set up two Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM), meant to reduce tensions on the frontlines within Georgia. The two mechanisms fall under different auspices: the Gali Mechanism for Abkhazia is supervised by the UN chairmanship in the regional UNHCR office, while the Ergneti Mechanism for South Ossetia is facilitated by the EU and the OSCE.

Some progress has been made in the context of these mechanisms. The Gali IPRM recently agreed regulations for patrol behavior on the Abkhazia-Georgia line of separation. Apart from the established mechanisms for discussion, the OSCE continues to promote confidence-building measures between parties, such as carrying out water supply related projects on Georgian and South Ossetian-held territory. Nonetheless, the fundamental political differences between the parties to the conflict are very unlikely to dissipate soon.

dispute. The result has been an up-tick in diplomacy over the various conflicts, but as of mid-2011 this had delivered few tangible results.

ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

The OSCE maintains a relatively large office in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, and a similar one in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. These offices primarily focus on issues such as press freedom and the administration of justice, and are explicitly not involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. The frozen conflict is dealt with by a special envoy (the “Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference”) based in Georgia. This post has been filled since 1996 by Andrzej Kasprzyk, supported by a handful of staff in Tbilisi, Baku, Yerevan and Stepanakert, the “capital” of Nagorno-Karabakh (known as Kahnkendi in Azeri).

Since full-scale hostilities concluded in 1994, Armenian troops have held Nagorno-Karabakh

and a significant part of south-west Azerbaijan. The front line has remained heavily militarized and often been unstable, and the number of incidents showed a worrying increase in the second half of 2010. In October 2010, the French, Russian and US ambassadors to the OSCE visited Armenian-held Azeri territory surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh in the company of an official from the UN High Commission for Refugees. They noted that this fact-finding mission, facilitated by Ambassador Kasprzyk’s team, was “the first mission by the international community to the territories since 2005, and the first visit by UN personnel in 18 years.”¹ The ambassadors reported that the areas that they visited were in a wretched condition.

While the OSCE convened its first major summit in a decade in Astana, Kazakhstan, in December 2010, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan signed onto an extremely general statement on the need to resolve the dispute. However, they were unable to use the opportunity to agree on basic principles for ending the conflict. In February 2011, the International Crisis Group (ICG) warned of the risk of a return to war.²

EUSR for Moldova*

Latest Key Resolution	11 August 2010 (date of issue); 1 September 2010 (date of effect) (Council Decision 2010/448/CFSP)
Authorization and Start Date	23 March 2005 (date of issue) (Council Joint Action 2005/265/ CFSP)
Special Representative	Kálmán Mizsei (Hungary) (Appointed by Council Joint Action of 15 February 2007)
First EUSR	Adriaan Jacobovits de Szeged (Netherlands)
Budget	\$1.2 million (1 September 2010- 28 February 2011)

Note: *The mandate of the EUSR ended on 28 February 2011 following the establishment of the EU External Action Service (EEAS).

EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova (EUBAM)

Authorization Date	7 October 2005 (date of issue) (The Memorandum of Understanding)
Start Date	30 November 2005
Head of Mission	Udo Burkholder (Germany)
Deputy Head of Mission	Slawomir Pichor (Poland)
Budget	Approx. \$17.0 million (December 2010-November 2011)
Staff Strength as of 1 April 2011	International Staff: 100 National Staff: 126

OSCE Mission to Moldova

Authorization Date	4 February 1993 (19-CSO/Journal No. 3, Annex 3)
Start Date	April 1993
Head of Mission	Ambassador Philip N. Remler (US)
Budget	\$3.0 million (1 January 2011- 31 December 2011)
Strength as of 30 April 2011	International Staff: 11 National Staff: 41

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The three co-chairs of the Minsk Process – France, Russia and the United States – responded to these signs of deterioration by increasing their diplomatic efforts with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. On 5 March, President Medvedev hosted his Armenian and Azeri counterparts in Sochi to discuss the issue.

On 26 May, Presidents Medvedev, Obama and Sarkozy released a statement at the G8 Summit in Deauville, France, encouraging Armenia and Azerbaijan to move towards peace on the basis of their discussions in Sochi. President Medvedev had invited the two countries' leaders to another meeting in Kazan on 24 June, and there was a brief burst of speculation that a breakthrough might be in the offing. The goal was not a final deal but an agreement on the basic framework for an agreement based on a set of principles originally laid out by the co-chairs in November 2007. Raising expectations, President Obama spoke with the leaders by telephone in advance of the event.

The summit was, however, a failure, as no framework agreement was signed. An analysis of the event by Thomas De Waal, the leading Western expert on the conflict, suggests that this was largely due to Azerbaijan's concerns, which included territorial interests and an underlying suspicion of Russian motives.³ While this was seen as a significant setback for Russian diplomacy, Azerbaijan was bolstered by a visit by the Prime Minister of Turkey – its closest regional friend – the following month. In spite the efforts of the Minsk co-chairs and the OSCE, the pressure for a final deal has yet to reach a decisive level.

MOLDOVA

In late 2010, there were some promising signs for progress in resolving the long-standing frozen conflict in Moldova. Since clashes in 1992, Transdnistria – a narrow strip of land along the country's eastern border with Ukraine – has maintained *de facto* independence from Moldova. The EU, however, has made efforts to strengthen the Moldovan state and economy, and deployed a border monitoring mission in 2005 to monitor trade between Ukraine and Moldova through Transdnistrian-held territory.

In 2010, Russia indicated that it saw resolving the Moldovan situation as a “pilot project” for better relations with the EU. This had the potential to weaken the role of the OSCE, which has maintained a mission in Moldova since 1993 and played a central role in earlier talks. However, the Russian initiative has not yet gained momentum, not least because some EU members are skeptical.

Since 2005, talks on the frozen conflict have taken place in the so-called “5+2” format, involving Moldova, Transnistria, Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE plus the EU and US as observers (the EU and US were absent from previous rounds of talks). Since 2006, 5+2 consultations have only taken place on an informal basis, however. Perhaps concerned that Russia’s efforts to discuss the issue bilaterally might upset the parties to the conflict or the US and Ukraine, the EU’s Special Representative to Moldova urged the parties to revitalize the 5+2 format. In February 2011, Lithuania announced that it would use its chairmanship to lobby for the resumption of formal 5+2 negotiations. On 21 June, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Protracted Conflicts, Giedrius Čekuolis, chaired a further informal meeting of the parties to discuss the possibility of full-fledged negotiations. This broke up inconclusively, however.

Meanwhile the OSCE’s mission in Moldova continued to undertake a range of activities aimed at strengthening the legal system, human rights and civil society. It continues to support working-level and political dialogues between Moldovan and Transnistrian officials. But diplomacy with Moldova has been complicated by a constitutional impasse in the parliament that has made it impossible to elect a president, with the parliament’s speaker holding the post in the interim.

BALANCING THE EU AND THE OSCE

The diplomatic initiatives over both Nagorno-Karabakh and Moldova in 2011 took place through processes with the OSCE in a central role: the Minsk Process and the 5+2 format. While these formats ensure that Russia and the US have a continued role in addressing the frozen conflicts, some analysts believe that the EU’s financial and political clout give it special leverage in the region. The EU offered to liberalize its visa regime with Moldova

Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference (CiO Representative on Minsk Conference)

Authorization Date	10 August 1995 (DOC. 525/95)
Start Date	January 1997
Head of Mission	Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk (Poland)
Budget	\$1.6 million (1 January 2011- 31 December 2011)
Strength as of 30 April 2011	International Staff: 6 National Staff: 11

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EUSR for the Crisis in Georgia

Latest Key Resolution	25 August 2011 (date of issue); 1 September 2011 (date of effect) (Council Decision 2011/518/CFSP)
Authorization and Start Date	15 September 2008 (date of issue) (Council Joint Action 2008/736/ CFSP)
Special Representative	Philippe Lefort (France) (Appointed by Council Decision of 25 August 2011)
First EUSR	Pierre Morel (France)
Budget	\$1.5 million (1 September 2010-31 August 2011)

EUSR for the South Caucasus

Latest Key Resolution	25 August 2011 (date of issue); 1 September 2011 (date of effect) (Council Decision 2011/518/CFSP)
Authorization and Start Date	7 July 2003 (date of issue); 1 July 2003 (date of effect) (Council Joint Action 2003/496/ CFSP)
Special Representative	Philippe Lefort (France) (Appointed by Council Decision of 25 August 2011)
First EUSR	Heikki Talvitie (Finland)
Budget	\$2.0 million (1 September 2010- 28 February 2011)

*Note: *The mandate of the EUSR ended on 28 February 2011 following the establishment of the EU External Action Service (EEAS).*

in January 2011. In July, Bronislaw Komorowski the President of Poland – then holder of the rotating EU presidency – made a visit to Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The EU's representation has been affected by the reorganization of the Union's foreign policy mechanisms in light of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty. The EU's Special Representatives to both Moldova and the South Caucasus had their positions terminated in February 2011 (the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova continues). Further to criticisms that the lack of a regional representative limited its diplomatic options in the South Caucasus, the EU appointed a new EUSR for the region in late August 2011. The post is now held by Philippe Lefort of France, who also doubles as the EUSR for the Crisis in Georgia, replacing Pierre Morel.

CONCLUSION

Although the diplomatic efforts devoted to both Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh had not produced significant breakthroughs by mid-2011, they may prove to have been a prelude to greater progress later. Although there has been a focus on high-level diplomacy over the two frozen conflicts, the OSCE missions in the region continue to provide significant on-the-ground assistance. It is hard to envisage a solution to either conflict that does not involve a sustained international presence, and political missions will probably have a role in the former Soviet space for some time.

NOTES

- 1 "Report: OSCE call Armenia and Azerbaijan to avoid any activity in the disputed territories," Armenia Now 25 March 2011 available at http://www.armenianow.com/karabakh/28553/report_osce_call_armenia_and_azerbaijan_to_avoid_any_activity_in_the_disputed_territories.
- 2 International Crisis Group, "Armenia and Azerbaijan: Preventing War," Europe Briefing No. 60, 8 February 2011 available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3FDC2A5C170FC3D149257832000B5C1F-Full_Report.pdf.
- 3 Thomas de Waal, "Can the 'Medvedev Moment' be Saved for Karabakh", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty online, 28 July 2011.