These Are the People in Your Neighbourhood:

Conflict Prevention and the Desecuritisation of Minorities Through European Union External Relations

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13 August 2010

A Thesis submitted to the Board of Examiners in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

Abstract

As minority rights are recognised by international institutions to play an important role in conflict prevention, the objective of this thesis is to identify institutional external relations strategies with minority rights-violating states that can assist in the prevention of violent conflict. By utilising the Copenhagen School's concepts of security and securitisation, this thesis argues that, due to the societal security nature of minority securitisation, structural and transformative conflict prevention measures can best assist in the desecuritisation of minorities and thus, help to prevent the escalation of violent conflict. This relationship is explored by analysing the European Union's ability to assist in minority desecuritisation via its external relations policies and development of stronger relations with its 'neighbour' states, particularly, Georgia. It concludes that EU external relations are insufficient to assist substantially in the desecuritisation process as they do not counter the identity discourses involved with minority securitisation and instead, focus primarily on state security and its own security concerns, and follow a misguided view on conflict prevention. This thesis concludes that if the EU is serious about conflict prevention in minority rights-violating states, it must reconstruct not only its own views but also those of others by promoting inclusiveness, offering alternative discourses, openly criticising policies and actions, and applying a critical security analysis through its external relations and conflict prevention policies.

Keywords: minority rights; securitisation; conflict prevention; conflict transformation; external relations; European Union; Georgia

Acknowledgements

First, I want to express my gratitude for the patient and enthusiastic support and guidance of my supervisor, Dr. Berma Klein Goldewijk. Her knowledge and passion for her work has been an inspiration to me.

I am thankful for my internship at the Association Européenne pour la défense des Droits de l'Homme/European Association for the Defense of Human Rights (AEDH) in Brussels, which exposed me to the internal workings and debates within the European Union. I appreciate the assistance of board member, Aleksejs Dimitrovs, who discussed with me current minority rights issues within the EU and offered potential case studies.

I would like to thank my fiancé, Stephen Birek, for coming along on an adventure. I could not have made it through the year without his presence, criticism, and praise.

This thesis would not have been possible without my parents, Denis and Beverly Coulterman. I owe my deepest respects for their constant, unwavering support for what I choose to do in my life. Their endless encouragement and love helped me to be where I am today.

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Abbreviations

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CoE	Council of Europe
Commission	European Commission
Council	Council of the European Union
CSS	critical security studies
EC	European Council
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EP	European Parliament
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
EUSR	EU Special Representative (for the South Caucasus)
FCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
ICG	International Crisis Group
IfS	Instrument for Stability
IIFFMCG	Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia
MRG	Minority Rights Group International
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UN	United Nations

GEORGIA

RUSSIA

ABKHAZIA

Sukhum•

BLACK SEA

RACHA-LECHKHUMI & KVEMO SVANETI

Ambrolauri•

•Zugdidi

SAMEGRELO-ZEMO SVANETI

SOUTH OSSETIA

MTKHETA - MTIANETI

Tskhinvali•

Kutaisi•

Poti•

IMERETI

SHIDA KARTLI

•Gori

•Telavi

Ozurgeti•

GURIA

•Mtskheta

KAKHETI

Batumi•

AJARA

Adigeni•

Akhaltsikhe•

Aspindza•

Borjomi•

TBILISI

Tsalka•

Tetri Tskaro•

Rustavi•

SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI

KVEMO KARTLI

Gardabani•

Akhalkalaki•

Bolnisi•

Marneuli•

Dmanisi•

⚑ GARDABANI Checkpoint

⚑ RED BRIDGE Checkpoint

⚑

Ninotsminda•

⚑ SADAKHLO Checkpoint

TURKEY

⚑ NINOTSMINDA Checkpoint

ARMENIA

AZERBAIJAN

LEGEND

- Capital of Georgia
• - Settlement
- State Border
- Borders of Autonomous Republics
= = = - Border of Former South Ossetia AO
- Borders of administrative regions
- Borders of municipalities
⚑ - Checkpoints

This map is for reference only and should not be taken to imply political endorsement of its content.

International Crisis Group 2006b, *Europe Report N°178: Georgia's Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 31.

"Your neighbour's vision is as true for him as your own vision is true for you."
Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936)

"If you want to annoy your neighbours, tell the truth about them."
Pietro Aretino (1492-1556)

Introduction

In the past two decades, international and regional institutions have progressively recognised the value in acknowledging the specific political, cultural, and identity needs of minorities and have created a space for minority rights within the larger human rights framework. After the end of the Cold War, outbreaks of ethnic tensions and conflicts occurred close to home for people living on European soil. As these struggles were felt as a direct attack on its 'peace project', Europe created new relationships, legal mechanisms, and normative instruments to manage this growing space and interconnectedness. The protection of minorities and the promotion of their rights became an important goal in this project to maintain international 'stability, security and peace'. Given the overall increased influence of institutions, such as the European Union, on states, with their aim of policy alignment and integration, these organisations' policies play a central role in the prioritisation of minority rights and also in conflict prevention. As a result, these institutions, with their normative and legal instruments, have now conferred upon themselves the responsibility to promote the development of societies that support minority rights and to present a positive framing of minorities, their needs, and their aspirations.

This thesis takes as its starting point the debate about states' and institutions' underlying motivations for the implementation of minority rights policies. Specifically, its tackles the connection and tension between the aspirations of minority rights and the perception of minority groups as a security concern. It examines the issue of security within the theories of critical security studies, a branch of study that focuses on the meanings of 'security' and the act of 'securitisation'. A number of authors suggest that minorities, because states and institutions see them as an issue of security, are prone to a process called securitisation through which their rights may be violated (Jutila 2006; Kymlicka 2002, 2007, 2008; Roe 2004; Sasse 2005). In their works, the authors consider the actors that 'securitise' minorities, what securitisation entails, the consequences of policies, and if and how minorities can be 'desecuritised'. Their goal is to critique states' and institutions' real motivations towards the recognition or non-recognition of minority rights. While they do not specifically address this effect, a study of minority securitisation can also help to understand how these rights violations can result in violent conflict; thus, an understanding of the minority-security nexus can connect securitisation and its related concept of desecuritisation to the prevention of violent conflict.

The aim of this thesis is not to uncover the causes of violent conflict, but to note a specific element in the escalation of conflict and to identify appropriate responses. The following analysis, therefore, explores the interconnection between minority rights, securitisation, and conflict prevention. Taking on the concern for the securitisation of minorities as its *raison d'être*,

this thesis creates a theoretical understanding of the desecuritisation of minority groups as a conflict prevention measure and examines the practical possibilities of this desecuritisation within a policy context. First, it creates a dynamic relationship between the concepts of desecuritisation and conflict prevention through identity-related needs and shows how this synthesis offers a redemptive opportunity to end the securitisation of minority groups through not only structural change, but, most importantly, the transformation of actors and society. Furthermore, this thesis positions the minority-security nexus and ideas of structural and transformative conflict prevention within a larger policy context. Analysts have considered the implications on minority rights of the European Union's (EU) accession process (Sasse 2008b); the United Nations' (UN) discourse, limits, and contradictions (Kymlicka 2008); and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe's (CoE) framing and initiatives (Sasse 2005), all concluding with mixed feelings about the effectiveness of their approaches to promoting minority rights. This thesis focuses on the implications for minority rights through one such relationship: the EU and its external relations with its 'neighbouring' states. The central goal is to understand whether the EU's current activities are helping to 'normalise' and desecuritise minority aspirations (Kymlicka 2002:22) or whether they are perpetuating policies that cannot substantially challenge their securitisation. Therefore, this thesis will attempt to answer the following research problem:

As adherence to minority rights is integral to the prevention of violent conflict, can the EU assist substantially in the desecuritisation of minorities through its external relations with neighbouring minority rights-violating states?

This research proposes that minority desecuritisation is an attainable and essential component in the prevention of violent conflict in cases where there are minority rights violations and/or perceived ethnic/group tensions. This analysis assumes, first, that where there are rights violations, minorities are securitised; and, second, the minority 'security-ness' supposed by states and institutions is not a given fact, rather, the act of securitising is a calculated choice and thus can be challenged. Based on theories of critical security studies, it hypotheses that policies – conflict prevention, external relations, and otherwise – and institutional discourse must recognise and incorporate the aim of minority desecuritisation in order to assist in the prevention of violent conflict. However, it proposes that without an understanding of societal security, external relations policies and conflict prevention practices cannot substantially meet the desecuritising needs of societies and minority groups. In the end, it suggests that the use of structural and transformative conflict prevention strategies is the best way to assist in minority desecuritisation.

With this perception in mind, this frame is placed onto specific conflict prevention and external relations policies of the EU in order to question if they incorporate effective structural and transformative conflict prevention strategies. To refine this analysis, this thesis examines the EU's experience in Georgia and their relations from its first partnership agreement in 1999 up to the 2008 Georgia-Russia conflict. In the end, it attempts to understand, in light of the research findings, the implications for the EU's policy approaches and its obligations towards minority groups in societies that are at risk for outbreaks of violent conflict. It concludes with

recommendations for more substantial policies and discourse that will enable the EU to assist in minority desecuritisation and the prevention of violent conflicts.

Defining conflict prevention

It is first necessary to introduce a definition of conflict prevention before the development of a larger framework of methods that can assist in the desecuritisation of minorities. Lund understands conflict prevention as a proactive effort of:

> any structural or intercessory means to keep intrastate or interstate tensions and disputes from escalating into significant violence and use of armed force, to strengthen the capabilities of potential parties to violent conflict for resolving their disputes peacefully, and to progressively reduce the underlying problems that produce those issues and disputes. (2002:117 n.6)

This contrasts to the reactive efforts of conflict management and resolution which occur after violent conflict escalates and ensues. Conflict management is the attempt to manage and to contain conflicts and to intervene in order to achieve political settlements; conflict resolution aims to explore, analyse, question, and reframe conflict parties' positions and explores the root causes of conflict to identify creative solutions (Miall 2004:3). There is a recognised inconsistency with definitions of conflict prevention, resolution, and management as they are consistently broad, draw on the same concepts, and used as synonyms for each other (Ackermann 2003; Miall 2004). At the core, different approaches must be used at different times before, during, and after an outbreak of violent conflict; or, if the conflict is protracted, then a variety of approaches may be continually in use to mitigate the chances of outbreaks. In order to focus the scope of this thesis, it will not centre on the 'during' and 'after' timeframes that would require it to cover a wider conceptualisation of negotiations, peacemaking, peacebuilding, and reconstruction. Instead, it will concentrate on conflict prevention as a 'before' measure used in places where there is potential for an outbreak of violent conflict whether violent conflict has or has not occurred there before.

Defining and developing minority rights

This thesis focuses specifically on groups of people identified as 'national minorities'. There is no widely held or specific definition for national minorities as legal and political institutions have been cautious to create an overarching classification. This leaves the definition quite malleable to state interests, and as well, it opens up a debate about the differences between 'national minorities', 'old' and 'new' minorities, and the legal differences between minorities, migrants, and indigenous peoples (Kymlicka 2007, 2008). The most well-known definition of a national minority is that of Francesco Capotorti, the former UN Special Rapporteur for the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities:

A group numerically smaller to the rest of the population of the State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the State – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion, or language. (1991:98)

National minorities (which will be referred to as 'minorities') can also include the terms kin-state group, which is a group of individuals whose background is connected to another state outside of their state of residence (such as Russians in Ukraine) or ethnic minority (such as Kurds in Iraq).

The general aim of minority rights is to protect individuals who identify with a minority group by supporting their existence, identity (such as language and culture), and political and economic participation as well as battling discrimination and racism (Baldwin et al. 2007:5). This is facilitated by policies that permit the use of minority languages, allow access to citizenship, establish power-sharing mechanisms or autonomy, and create inclusive economic systems. A number of debates continue around the application of minority rights: legal definitions; states' non-compliance; and the distinction between group and individual rights under international human rights law (see Kymlicka 2008; Macklem 2008; Sasse 2005; Wheatley 2002). However, it is not the concept or effective application of these rights that are of concern in this thesis; rather, it is an aspect of the motivation for their use: minority rights as a basis for conflict prevention.

Development of minority rights for conflict prevention
The development of the international minority rights framework began post-World War I, but the turning point for modern minority rights occurred around the breakup of the Soviet Union and the conflicts throughout the former Yugoslavia.[1] These 'ethnic'[2] conflicts highlighted the devastation that can befall communities and countries if the identity, economic, social, and political rights of people who belong to and identity with different national, cultural, and ethnic groups are targeted and systemically violated. What followed in intergovernmental institutions was a corresponding interest in and growth of both conflict prevention and minority rights mechanisms. The international community feared the spread of instability from these violent conflicts in its neighbourhood and believed that "peace, democracy, freedoms and respect for human rights in Europe are at stake" (CoE 1992b). In 1992, the UN document *An Agenda for Peace* became a focal point for the cause of conflict prevention along with stepped up efforts from other organisations such as the OSCE's (then the CSCE) creation of a Conflict Prevention Centre. The creation of a growing body of minority rights paralleled this interest along with the belief that there is a direct link between the promotion of these rights and the maintenance of peace, security, and stability of states. This idea is not just speculation: civil and political aspects of minority rights, when abused by the state, are more likely to trigger internal conflict (Thoms & Ron 2007:697). Violations of minority rights can therefore be warning signs of an escalation of conflict and so conflict prevention policies must confront these situations.

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[1] For a more historic overview of minority rights, see Macklem 2008.
[2] This thesis will elaborate on the perception of identity and groups in conflict in its analytical framework.

All international and regional institutions now recognise minority rights as a conflict prevention tool. The UN affirmed this in the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and now appoints an Independent Expert on minority issues who responds to potential abuses of minority rights. The OSCE maintains a High Commissioner on National Minorities, whose mandate is to prevent conflict "at the earliest possible stage" with a focus only on minority issues with security implications (Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations 1999); and in 1999, the OSCE created the so-called Lund Recommendations to support the goal of conflict prevention though the political participation of minorities. The CoE's European Convention of Human Rights, created in 1950, prohibits discrimination from the enjoyment of rights and freedoms based on "association with a national minority" (CoE 1950:Art. 14) and provides the legal basis for cases at the European Court of Human Rights. In 1992, the CoE created the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and followed up with the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), which promotes language, economic, and social rights, access to information, cultural preservation and development, and freedom of religion, and affirms that the protection of national minorities is essential to stability, democratic security, and peace (CoE 1992a). Nowadays, consistent monitoring of members of these organisations for their adherence to these principles is the norm and if states commit violations, public forums are available for their criticism.

Minority rights and the European Union
In the list of major minority rights instruments, the EU is conspicuously absent as it does not possess an instrument of its own that speaks exclusively to minority rights. Nevertheless, the issue of minority rights has become a litmus test for the improvement of democracy and human rights in states that plan to accede to the EU or are within the EU's neighbourhood[3]. Recently, the EU made binding its Charter of Fundamental Rights, an instrument that applies only to the implementation of EU law in Member States, which prohibits discrimination based on membership of a national minority (EU 2000:Art 21.1). In its Copenhagen Criteria which imposes accession conditions, the adoption of and adherence to general minority rights is a political precondition for countries that want to join the EU (EC 1995: Annex 9.II). While required to meet economic and trade markers and to harmonise administrative procedures, there is potentially much at stake for these states also to prove they meet the EU requirements of recognising and implementing human rights law.

Given the increasing influence of the EU not only on its Member States, it is an important participant in the promotion, justification, and monitoring of minority rights worldwide. Yet most EU references to and monitoring of minority rights adherence refer to the external instruments noted above, particularly the FCNM, and depend on the reports and evaluations they generate.[4] This is why the EU's norms have been criticised as flexible and without a clear

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[3] Currently, the 'neighbourhood' refers to those non-Member states along the Mediterranean in North Africa and the Middle East as well as in the South Caucasus and those former Soviet states between the EU's eastern boundary and Russia who are members of the European Neighbourhood Policy (discussed later in this thesis).

[4] See the Commission's Enlargement Strategy and Progress Reports, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/ press_corner/key-documents/index_en.htm.

legal base or benchmarks (Sasse 2008b: 843). The EU has also been criticised for not applying internally the minority rights norms it expects from acceding states (Johns 2003; Kymlicka 2008:23-24) and reactions are mixed on the success of EU enlargement criteria on minority rights (Kelley 2004; Sasse 2008b). Despite a 2006 European Parliament (EP) 'resolution on the protection of minorities and anti-discrimination policies in an enlarged Europe' that implores the EU to create more consistent policies towards minorities (2006), the only coherent minority rights vision presents itself through anti-discrimination provisions in the Lisbon Treaty (EU 2007:II.10). Otherwise, the application of minority rights is a piecemeal exercise (see Toggenburg 2008). As will be shown, minority rights and conflict prevention strategies can work together to desecuritise minorities, but a lack of clear vision on minority rights and no detailed policies within the EU indicates that it is unable to effectively oblige Member States or other countries to meet these standards. Consequently, the onus for desecuritisation lies in its approach to external relations and conflict prevention, which must be sufficient enough to deal with the nature of perceived minority conflicts. These components will be further analysed in the following section.

Conclusion

This section outlined the definitions of conflict prevention and minority rights and analysed the development of minority rights policies in light of their conflict prevention aim. It finds that adherence to minority rights is understood by institutions as a key tool in the prevention of violent conflict. However, the EU lags behind in promoting minority rights, but it still must make an effort to recognise their important conflict prevention qualities in its external relations. This thesis now synthesises how the recognition of minority securitisation can assist in institutional policies of conflict prevention and vice versa. First, it explains the academic field of critical security studies and its critique of conceptions of security. The thesis then creates as its theoretical core an understanding that minority issues are based in the concept of societal security; thus, the subject of identity is key to minority desecuritisation. It distinguishes the ideas and forms of conflict prevention and examines them for their ability to recognise minorities' concerns and to assist in their desecuritisation. It then presents the most appropriate policies and approaches to assist in minority desecuritisation, which will be used later to analyse external relations policies.

Chapter 1: Analytical Frame – criticising security, preventing conflict

This section will consider questions on the nature of minority securitisation and on which types of conflict prevention strategies are best suited to assist in the desecuritisation of minorities. To do so, this chapter first outlines the theories of critical security studies and how they relate to aspects of minority de/securitisation. This creates an understanding of the creation of security and acts of securitisation, the prominence of identity in minority securitisation, and what is necessary for the desecuritisation of minorities. It connects the methods of desecuritisation to those of conflict prevention strategies. It views conflict prevention in a holistic sense: it goes beyond operational and diplomatic capacities to prevent outbreaks of violent conflict and recognises the importance of tackling structural, long-term political and societal issues related to the de/securitisation of minority groups. Through this evaluation, it proposes that structural and transformative approaches are essential for minority desecuritisation.

1.1 Criticising security: identity politics

In this research, the EU's external relations and approach to conflict prevention are analysed though the frame of critical security studies (CSS). The aim of CSS is to expand security studies beyond its state-centric view towards a wider conception of what constitutes a security concern. Thus, it has developed a conception of which actors can engage in security, widened the scope, and increased the involvement of numerous elements and sectors in society in the performance of security. In short, it is concerned with the "political construction of insecurity and danger" (van Munster 2007:236). It is not necessary to go further into detail about the challenges CSS makes to traditional security studies (see Buzan et al. 1998); what is important for this research are the elements that assist in recognising how securitisation relates to the escalation and de-escalation of violent conflict, particularly with regards to minorities.

Securitisation within the Copenhagen School

In CSS, security is discursive, political, relational, and social; it rejects security needs as a fact and sees them as a socially constructive act. The Copenhagen School of CSS has been used as a basis by some authors to understand modern minority rights dilemmas (see Jutila 2006; Kymlicka 2007; Roe 2004; Sasse 2005). The Copenhagen School's body of work has been an important tool for these academics in understanding how various states and institutions approach minorities' rights and aspirations. The key aspects of its approach are the ideas of 'securitisation' and 'security' as a 'speech act'. Securitisation happens when a speech act made by a 'securitising actor' – who labels something as a 'security issue' against an aspect of collective survival – takes the issue from regular day-to-day politics and elevates it to a level of an 'existential threat' that justifies extreme measures to deal with the issue (C.A.S.E. Collective 2006:453). The threat is towards the survival of a 'referent object', which can be not only the traditional state, but also anything in the economic, environmental, political, military, or societal sector. Within a state building up to or on the brink of violent conflict, a certain sector or 'object' is typically promoted, justified, and framed as a security issue as one that must be dealt with through extraordinary measures – such as violent repression, expulsion, or through the acquisition of assets – outside of 'normal politics'. In addition, there must be a willing and

susceptible audience to allow this act to happen and an available discourse on which the speech act can draw on. This makes the concept of security rather slippery: who is security for? What is the fear based on? What does security mean and what does it entail? CSS emphasises that the answers are subjective, interpretive, creative, and shifting, and therefore, the true motivations of so-called 'security' must be questioned. The key to understanding securitisation in the context of this thesis is that it is a process that is not inevitable: it is constructed for particular goals and means and it is built on a particular societal discourse or understanding. This infers that the elements that create an act of securitisation can be altered, criticised, and transformed.

Minorities and the securitisation of identity
According to Kymlicka, securitisation of minorities occurs when relations between states and minorities are not seen as a matter of "normal democratic politics to be negotiated and debated" but as a matter of state security, framed as a destabilising threat to state power and cohesion, with minority groups working as 'collaborators' with kin states (2002:18-20). As a result, states may ban political parties, institute police surveillance, introduce nationalist monocultural practices, and limit cultural rights. Kymlicka situates minority issues firmly within a more narrow sense of state security and focuses on the threat of their perceived quest for autonomy or secession; however, they identify more appropriately with societal security.

Identity, particularly group identity, is important to humans: human lives are constructed through identity and basic human needs can be found through the cohesive support of a group that shares an identity (Appiah 2006:19). Likewise, minority rights base their importance on the cohesion of individuals who ascribe to a minority group identity. Minority issues then lie within the sector of societal security as identity-related issues of survival; rights violations occur against minorities because institutionalised discourse views minority identity as a threat to societal cohesion and stability. Societal security relates, for example, to the fear of a challenge or change to a group's self-constructed image or so-called 'national' identity or destiny. Threats to societal security are frequently confused and tied with state security, as Kymlicka has done, but the securitisation of minorities can only be countered by recognising its societal qualities. A state's identity is a social and political construct and a state's acts create a societal image of itself to maintain. There is no eternal or definitive 'state interest' or 'national identity' (or likewise a minority group identity) and, for that reason, it is not so much a border as it is an identity that is the referent object. This aspect of security theory "[leaves] room for a concept of society detached from the state, and for circumstances in which identity politics [is] about maintaining difference rather than finding a collective image" (Buzan & Wæver 1997:248). A 'group' is a mission, not an inherent reality (Brubaker 2004), but securitisation is antithetical to the idea that identity is fluid and reflexive. So the securitisation of minorities aims to focus on and maintain difference between groups in society. The challenge then is to discover how to confront these securitising acts. Minority securitisation demonstrates itself in institutional and state discourse and policies, but the problem – and the solution – lies within the political structures and the mind-set of the actors involved.

1.2 Criticising security: seeking the 'normal' through desecuritisation

How to desecuritise an issue, or even if it should or can happen, is much debated between theorists (McDonald 2008; Roe 2004). However, Buzan et al. assert that desecuritisation is 'optimal' in the long-term (1998:29). This thesis lies on the premise that desecuritisation can and should occur; what it leads to is a transformed state of affairs in which the dialogue and measures present would not give basis to the manifestation of abuses of human rights and violent events. Securitisation is a political choice and should not be a permanent state of affairs; therefore, the aim is to move the issue into a 'normal' sphere where there can be open dialogue.

There are two aims within desecuritisation: to return or move towards 'normal' politics (Buzan et al. 1998) and to deinstitutionalise the exceptionalism of securitisation (van Munster 2007:240-241). First, securitisation can be viewed as an "extreme version of politicization" in which policies counter 'normal' politics and the aim to pursue the 'good life' (Jutila 2006:172); to desecuritise then is to turn away from that politicisation and institute better policies for peoples' livelihoods. Kymlicka offers three propositions for the move to normal politics: first, he proposes that democratic policies based on rights, equality, and social justice, including economic prosperity, can help to overcome minority securitisation; second, he offers that peoples' beliefs and expectations about state-minority relations must change to allow policies such as accommodation as opposed to assimilation or integration; third, he promotes an evolution of structures of 'geo-political security' (2002:20-22). Essentially, Kymlicka (2008) approves of a shift towards a 'liberal-democratic state' that effectively integrates multicultural policies; he proposes exporting the ideas of Western democracy, which would encourage people to accept different political setups and arrangements. Sasse, another minority-security theorist, suggests that minorities are inherently an issue of security; nevertheless, her ideas still respond to the problem of securitisation. Sasse supports a rights-based approach, which promotes access to political and economic rights. Societies find justice within security and therefore, the policies of states and regional institutions must embrace the security discourse when applying rights instead of work against it (2005:679). These policies can include cultural recognition, inclusive language laws, and the right to citizenship and political participation.

Kymlicka and Sasse offer the 'good life' policies that can counter extreme politicisation. However, to order to attempt to prevent the escalation and outbreak of violent conflict, particularly in the case of protracted or 'frozen' conflicts[5], there is also a need to challenge in a multifaceted, 'deep' way the institutionalisation of securitisation. To go beyond democratic assertions and assist in desecuritisation's deeper needs, Jutila insists that a prerequisite for successful policies is a change in identity discourse. While some authors believe the maintenance of collective identity is so integral to minority rights that minorities cannot be desecuritised (Roe 2004), this is a static view and one that denies dynamic discourses and the discursive nature of security. For Jutila, desecuritisation is "the telling of the stories of the majority and minorities in such a way that those groups do not exclude each other from the political community" (2006:181); so, one must define society in a way that does not exclude other groups. Buzan et al. offer that to challenge institutionalised securitisation one can: stop

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[5] "'Frozen conflicts' are defined as those in which violent ethno-political conflict over secession has led to the establishment of a *de facto* regime that is recognized by neither the international community nor the rump state from which the secession occurred" (Clancy & Nagle 2009:14).

speaking about the threat in hopes that the securitising agenda is not adopted; divert attention to another threat; or contribute to a different interpretation of the threat (1998:34-35, 204-206 in C.A.S.E. Collective 2006:475). This last option can take minorities out of the 'security drama', embed "security questions in politically significant representations that do not ground identity on the basis of fear," and show the "availability of alternative discourses that already exist at the margins of official foreign policy discourse" (van Munster 2007:241). At their core, societies are dynamic and changing with numerous discourses and worldviews. The aim for institutions then, in order to try to desecuritise minorities and to attempt to prevent conflict should be to offer positive reinterpretations for society.

1.3 Preventing conflict: structure and transformation

This thesis identifies the securitisation of minority groups as a factor in violent conflict in order to understand the extent to which institutional policies can substantially assist in the conflict prevention process. In this aim, it recognises that the manifestation of conflict is multi-layered and related to different institutional levels and larger political and economic linkages (Azar 1990). As the causes of conflict are dynamic, conflict prevention cannot focus solely on issues and goals at the party and elite level or short-term interventions such as military or economic support or sanctions; there are contexts and environments which must be recognised and which require changes, such as the relationships between actors, power asymmetries, economic dependency, and cultures which fuel violence. Accordingly, there are two types of conflict prevention: operational/light and structural/deep (Ackermann 2003; Miall 2004; Ramsbotham et al. 2006). Operational prevention includes measures such as monitoring missions, negotiations, mediation, opportunities for dialogue, and confidence-building measures[6]. Structural prevention is longer-term and includes measures that facilitate governance, economic development with low levels of horizontal inequalities, political and societal stability, respect for human rights, poverty reduction, and building civil society. As demonstrated above, the securitisation of minority groups is an issue of identity and societal security or, in other words, the denial of basic human needs. Structural measures, therefore, are more inclined to assist in minority rights issues because of their focus on basic needs and the environment needed to fulfil adequately those needs. They also incorporate the types of desecuritisation measures as proposed by the minority-security theorists. This demonstrates how important the linkages are between conflict prevention and minority desecuritisation and how policies must maintain sensitivity towards group tensions and minority rights violations.

Yet as Wallensteen and Möller note, success in averting violent conflict requires deeper, structural change which can also help to decrease the salience of group identity (2003:8-9). Therefore, structural prevention, in a narrower sense, alone cannot satisfy the complexity of embedded securitisation, since one of the aims of the desecuritisation of minorities, aside from changing the political, legal, and economic structures, is to challenge entrenched ideas of identity. To attempt to overcome the root causes of conflict, particularly in protracted and

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[6] "Confidence-building measures include a broad range of activities designed to reduce military tensions, develop trust and communication, and demonstrate good faith between parties to a conflict...confidence-building measures can help to ease tensions between parties by establishing a pattern of positive action, open exchanges, and reliable implementation" (Public International Law & Policy Group 2007:4).

perceived ethnic conflicts, a transformation must occur on several levels. This entails not only a reframing of positions and discourses, but emphasises "the need for systemic change in order to alter the social structures, conflict parties and institutions within which conflicts are embedded" (Miall 2007:2). Diez and Pace promote conflict transformation as:

> the ultimate aim of third party intervention...[C]onflict will persist, but the way actors see themselves and relate to each other will have been transformed to such an extent that they will not resort to violent means, and ideally will change their identity so that conflict is fundamentally altered. (2007:3)

This transformation shows itself through the "extent to which they invoke the other party or parties as an existential threat to legitimise their actions, and ultimately violence" in the form of securitising moves (Ibid.). The goal then is to counter the existential threat and view the minority-security debate holistically with its need for political, economic, and societal changes. Therefore, transformative aspects must be recognised in policies and the way actors see themselves, their identities, and how they relate to each other in order to effectively desecuritise.

1.4 Institutional responsibility in desecuritisation and conflict prevention

Contributing to a different interpretation is precisely the constructive action that the EU can offer. Kymlicka sees a role for international organisations in normalising and desecuritising 'minority nationalism', but he questions whether international organisations are actually helping to normalise the debate. He states that while there have been some successes, they have not "effectively challenged dominant ideologies about the illegitimate nature of substate nationalist claims" nor accepted that these claims are a normal and legitimate part of everyday politics (2002:23). The actors who engage in securitisation can be any person, group, or institution, but they are also required to have some kind of influential authority or power over their audience (Buzan et al. 1998:31-33). The 'externalist' factors of processes, conditions, and contexts that the supranational and intergovernmental institutions create affect de/securitisation (Balzacq 2005:182). This means that the EU cannot be left out of the security picture nor deemed not responsible to attempt to desecuritise an issue. Buzan and Wæver believe "that one can and should engage in critical debates over how communities construct their identities" (1997:247). It is also the 'responsibility' of analysts, policymakers, etc. to talk about desecuritisation: it is a choice whether to refer to something in terms of security or desecurity (Ibid.:211). This recognises the ability of outsiders not only to promote policies and rights, but also to challenge conceptions of security conceived by states. These institutions are creators of minority-security discourses as demonstrated by their *modus operandi* of supporting continental stability and peace; but, while they do not engage directly in the securitisation of minorities, they must challenge the 'us' versus 'them' mentality that arises in the conception of societal security as well as help to reinterpret how the societal and political frontiers are drawn. This is an important task for tackling the identity-related issues within the securitisation of minorities and offers a more transformative way to prevent conflict.

Thus, the transformative challenge offered by outside actors is through discourse that can help to change expectations towards minority groups and their aspirations. This is analysed in what is or is not said or done. For example, does the EU utilise the same definitions or ideas as the minority rights-violating states it deals with? Does it offer alternative patterns of relationships? Do its policies address power disparities? Are the structure, norms, rules, institutions, and dominant patterns of discourse challenged (Miall 2007:6)? Can policies help to 'reframe' the actors' situations (Ibid.:8)? What kind of constructions and frames does the EU utilise when analysing a potential conflict?[7] Transformation, while sometimes thought of as a process only the grassroots or local population can effectively play a part in, can result from pressure from all levels of society. Miall notes the influential power of 'Track 1' practitioners – states and international organisations – on conflict parties and their success in cases where structural and operational conflict prevention have worked together to transform the 'context of the conflict' and the 'structure of the societies' (2004:13). Conflict prevention and desecuritisation must be a concern for the global, regional, state, and local levels and, due to its increased involvement, the EU has a responsibility now more than ever to assist in the desecuritisation of minorities.

The propositions are varied but complementary and only when all of these measures are used together can institutions and societies approach in a multifaceted and 'deep' way the de/securitisation of minorities in order to prevent violent conflict. To summarise, institutions can assist in the desecuritisation of minorities through: a state's integration into regional economic and security organisations; the effective implementation by a state of democratic policies; outside institutional assistance in a state's economic development; the general promotion of human rights, such as cultural and political rights; and challenges and alternatives to the pervasive discourses towards minority groups. These opportunities, collectively, can potentially challenge the minority-security dilemma in a two-pronged approach towards the levels of political structures and policies and pervasive issues of identity and discourse.

Conclusion

This analysis highlights the importance of understanding minorities within the frame of critical security studies in order to challenge violations of their rights and to prevent violent conflict. It finds that, as an issue of societal security, minority securitisation heightens the importance of structural and transformative conflict prevention factors. The securitisation of minority groups therefore is not inevitable – it can be countered in a holistic way with a number of policy initiatives. Policies should be concerned with the sensitive issues faced by persons belonging to minority groups and their relations to the state and other groups in society. The saliency of identities therefore must be taken into account in external relations and conflict prevention policies. This analytical frame and the recognition of the important role minority rights can play in preventing conflict will shed light on the EU's ability to desecuritise through their external relations policies towards minority rights-violating states.

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[7] For a more in-depth analysis of the constitutive relationship between foreign policy and identity, see Hansen 2006.

Chapter 2: European Union – misguided security, deficient prevention

The EU can play a leading role in promoting the cause of minority rights. Its expanding membership and partnership with potential Member States and so-called 'third countries' allows it, in some cases, to wield both a 'carrot' and a 'stick' in its relations to ensure compliance with its rules and standards. Equally, as the EU expands its influence and relations, it must confront a number of frozen conflicts in its neighbourhood. These include the *de facto* regions of Transnistria and ethnically divided Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. As the EU has developed, conflict prevention has accordingly become an important foreign policy objective. This section will respond to the question of the EU's ability to assist substantially in the desecuritisation of minorities through its external relations. It analyses the development of the EU's conflict prevention and external relations policies, evaluating them in light of their ability to assist in the desecuritisation of minorities through structural and transformative means. The aim is to examine the possibilities for the EU to move beyond operational conflict prevention approaches and support effective structural policies and a more transformative approach in order to assist the desecuritisation of minority groups.

However, as analysis will show, the EU's external relations are inadequate to confront situations where minority rights violations occur because its priorities are not fully compatible with the transformative needs of these societies. While its policies mention the importance of minority rights, these rights are part of a larger goal that equates the adherence to democratic values, human rights, rule of law, and economic development with peaceful, stable societies. This view in itself is not problematic as it recognises the need for long-term structural approaches; however, the EU has been criticised for not recognising the "political, ideological and group rivalries and grievances that underpin most dysfunctional or failed states and conflicts" (Hughes 2009:276).[8] The EU cannot adequately assist in minority desecuritisation through its external relations policies because they do not counter the identity discourses; instead, they focus primarily on state security, the EU's own security concerns and a misguided view on the transformative solutions needed to prevent violent conflict.

2.1 Aspirations for structural conflict prevention

The EU's foremost objective is one of economic integration, which has an historical basis in its first incarnation as the European Coal and Steel Community. However, it has now developed into a more complex institution with nuanced multilateral and bilateral relationships. Europe considers itself a successful 'peace project' that has helped "to consolidate democracy and to assure prosperity" between its Member States (Commission 2001:5). Yet over the years it has expanded its borders and also increased its political and economic outreach and assistance worldwide; its external relations and development assistance seek to "project stability beyond its own borders" (Ibid.:5-6) and broaden its peace project elsewhere. 'Europe' has become a mission: one that is not only economic, but political, social, and cultural as well. This effort, as

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[8] Grievances in this thesis are taken to mean wrongs felt from current and/or historical, real and/or perceived horizontal socio-economic inequalities and discrimination between groups (Murshed & Tadjoeddin 2007:15-21).

Jeandesboz suggests, entails a self-imposed notion of 'duty' to see that the EU works towards stability and prosperity beyond its borders (2007:395). However, working in parallel is the fear of 'threats': if the EU does not involve itself with its neighbours, it does so at the expense of its own internal security (Ibid.:397). Not to cooperate with its neighbours is not an option. This dual mindset has been reflected over the last twenty years in the EU's external relations policies and has consequently made a direct impact on the EU's concept of conflict prevention in its neighbourhood.

The 1992 Maastricht Treaty created the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), a concerted novel effort to solidify and outline the EU's general external policy objectives to strengthen EU regional security, promote international cooperation, and consolidate and develop democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights. It also included suggestions for contributing to the prevention and settlement of conflicts (Council of European Foreign Ministers 1992). The CFSP developed through subsequent treaties and works as the main policy force behind the EU's external interests and relations.[9] The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) (now known after the Lisbon Treaty as the Common Security and Defence Policy), launched in 1999, became its operational arm and focuses on short-term preventative civilian and military crisis management operations. These operations in the areas of "the rule of law, police or security sector reform help put in place key building blocks for democracy" which is "a tool for conflict prevention" (Commission 2009a:37). As part of the CFSP, a High Representative acts in diplomatic and advisory functions and a number of other centres and committees offer advisory, monitoring, and assessment roles. Thus, these two documents begin to promote the dual structural and operational conflict prevention approaches, yet, at the same time, consolidate the internal-external security agenda of the EU that influences later policies on how to 'maintain stability'.

It was not until 2001 that the EU endeavoured to define its conflict prevention policies and create a coherent strategy to confront the root causes of conflict. The *EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts* (Göteborg Programme) recognises several diverse themes of potential conflict triggers and a number of short- and long-term, direct, and indirect measures to undertake in order to 'project stability'. The EU presents itself as an already capable and involved actor in conflict prevention through development and economic cooperation, aid, mediation, etc. and lauds the successful democratic and economic changes in Central and Eastern European countries which have "reduced border disputes and nationalist tensions as well as allowing substantial progress in integrating minorities in society" (Commission 2001:7). It outlines a number of recommendations that can be categorised into structural and operational conflict prevention measures as previously defined and includes a number of 'good

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[9] Due to the old three 'pillar' structure, the EU splits foreign policy traditionally into two categories: external relations and development assistance. Sometimes, these two categories overlap within a country and many of the same concepts and ideas appear throughout its programmes, policies, and discussions. However, there is still a clear distinction between countries under the Directorate-General for Development (which includes most of Africa and Caribbean and Pacific states) and the Directorate-General for External Relations (which includes Europe's borders, Central Asia, and other developed states in the Americas and Asia). The EU views the states under the purview of the external relations directorate as economic and strategic partners with stronger connections to its own regional defence and security issues. This guides which policy instruments are used and in turn dictates the sources and uses of funding. Due to this strategic importance, external relations are the focus of this thesis.

life' policies (poverty reduction, human rights, social and environmental policies) that can assist in challenging societal securitisation:

Structural measures	Operational measures
Political & democratic development	Civilian & military crisis management
Regional economic integration	Rapid Response Mechanism (evolved into the Instrument for Stability in 2007)
Macroeconomic development	
Support for the rule of law	Economic sanctions
Social & environmental policies	Humanitarian aid
Poverty reduction	Electoral observers
Promotion of human rights	Negotiations, diplomacy, & mediation
Cross-cutting issues of health, trade in drugs and small arms, and trafficking	

Adapted from European Commission, EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts, 2001.

From the Göteborg Programme, the Commission created a now widely disseminated checklist for the root causes of conflict that EU missions in external countries can use in order to assess the potential for an outbreak of violent conflict. It covers: legitimacy of the state; rule of law; respect for fundamental rights; civil society and media; relations between communities and dispute-resolution mechanisms; economic management; socio-economic regional inequalities; and geopolitical instability (Commission 2008d:3-6). This checklist, along with the Programme, offers a profound recognition of the structural causes of conflict and can assist in the identification of ethnic tensions, minority rights violations, and securitisation. It is an important tool in mainstreaming conflict prevention policies throughout the EU. However, in practice, there are problems with the checklist approach: it works primarily in a short-term crisis management mode; the guidelines are rarely used and if so, typically only in the context of development as opposed to external relations programmes; and, in general, policy coherence and conflict sensitivity[10] have not become a natural mode of policy-making and programming (Banim 2006:273; Smith 2008:181-184). This means that the EU still lacks a proactive approach and environment for sufficient early warning mechanisms and analysis of potential conflict outbreaks that could help to establish timely structural programmes that move securitised situations towards 'normalcy'. The result thus far is that the Göteborg Programme initiative is the EU's one and only core conflict prevention document with subsequent external relations policies only recognising the necessity of conflict prevention measures. While the EU now has a wide toolbox of foreign policies and mechanisms at its disposal meant to ensure 'security, stability and peace', these instruments do not always encompass such a complex idea of conflict prevention.

2.2 Ascendency of state security in external relations

In 2003, the Council agreed on a European Security Strategy (ESS) which emphasises concerns over conflicts, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organised crime, and population growth and aims to "promote a ring of well governed" neighbouring states (EC 2003:8). This strategy demonstrates the primacy of the security sector, military capabilities,

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[10] Defined as scrutinising the potential positive and negative impacts of work on the conflict context and vice-versa.

trade, infrastructure, energy dependence, and a culture of rapid intervention that now permeates the EU's concept of conflict prevention measures. The measures it proposes do not touch heavily on the structural needs of societies in areas where the risk of violent conflict is present; when it speaks to societal factors, it offers post-conflict solutions of rule of law and economic instruments (Ibid.:7). A report on the ESS in 2008 did not alter its focus other than refine some of these issues and offer examples of success. Mentions of human security and a nexus between security and development appear but link more to the EU's concerns of state 'fragility'[11] than issues to be confronted within society. This focus continues in the 2007 Instrument for Stability (IfS) (previously the Rapid Response Mechanism). Close to three-quarters of the IfS budget assists short-term conflict prevention and post-conflict stabilisation and recovery, while the rest focuses on 'long-term' initiatives on terrorism, crime, and weapons (Commission 2010). Throughout the 2007-2013 Country Strategy Papers, conflict prevention is an 'and' rather than an 'end'. As in many documents, they rarely expand upon the concept of conflict prevention: the term is usually placed together in a sentence with other concepts such as human rights, good governance, and organised crime, as if it is an afterthought or obvious outcome of other policies. Within all these instruments, governance, state fragility, and Europe's own security take precedence over societal needs in both short- and long-term intervention timeframes.

The Council's 2007 report on the activities and implementation of the Göteborg Programme mirrors heavily the focus of the ESS. It places emphasis on operational measures such as civilian and military crisis management through the ESDP and the deployment of assessment teams (see Council 2007). Technical issues of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration are prominent. Its 'long-term' strategies increase in focus on links to terrorism, the proliferation of small arms, and resource management issues. The report does mention, however, what can be noted as structural success in societal security through its aid programme, the European Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), dedicated to funding human rights, anti-discrimination, minority rights, and democratisation projects run by civil society, individuals, and intergovernmental organisations. In addition, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is cited as a key tool for democratic reforms, minority rights, rule of law, regional cooperation, and cross-cutting issues. The 2008 report speaks to conflict sensitivity, general structural prevention, and the security-development nexus, but elaborates little else in terms of long-term structural measures except again within the framework of the ENP (see Council 2008c), thus the focus on state security remains.

2.3 European Neighbourhood Policy: prevention through 'Europeanisation'

Currently, the onus of long-term conflict prevention strategies in EU external relations is upon the strategic bilateral relationships created through the ENP and its funding mechanism, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The idea of the 2003 ENP grew

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[11] "Fragility refers to weak or failing structures and to situations where the social contract is broken due to the State's incapacity or unwillingness to deal with its basic functions, meet its obligations and responsibilities regarding service delivery, management of resources, rule of law, equitable access to power, security and safety of the populace and protection and promotion of citizens' rights and freedoms" (Commission 2007a:5).

from the CFSP, which recognised the importance of areas that have a geographical proximity to the EU where the existence of threats could endanger European security and political and economic interests (Council of European Foreign Ministers 1992:I.12). The EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, believes that the ENP is a cost-effective conflict prevention mechanism and "remains the 'only real tool' for the EU to promote stability around it" (Lobjakas 2010a). Thus, its main aim is to offer preferential relationships to countries within the EU's neighbourhood that will support reform in the economic, political, legal, and market realms; security; integration; and the free movement of persons, goods, services, and capital. This assistance will bring these countries closer to the European project and provide assurance to the EU's own citizens that it can continue to provide 'security, stability and sustainable development' alongside growing interdependence and proximity (Commission 2003a, 2005b:1). The country-specific ENP Action Plans are to contain direct references to conflict prevention and the implementation of dialogues on human rights, democratisation, justice, and security (Council 2007:12). Nevertheless, the External Relations Commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, insists that the ENP is not a "conflict prevention or settlement mechanism," but that it can contribute to a positive climate for conflict settlement through "promoting democracy and regional cooperation, boosting national reform programmes and improving the socio-economic prospects of the region" (Commission 2006b), which clarifies Füle's assertion and demonstrates the ENP's promotion as a structural mechanism.

What the EU suggests in the ENP is that the means to conflict prevention can be found through the replication of a specific climate: its own. It places major emphasis on the idea of the socialisation of third-countries through the adoption of European structures, values, and norms (i.e. economic openness, democracy, justice, human rights) (Sasse 2008a:303). This so-called process of 'Europeanisation' (which finds its roots in the EU accession process) assumes that integration with the EU will help to resolve conflicts through "deep-rooted change through an actual transformation of identity and interests...in the longer run" (Coppieters et al. 2004:2). This is the EU's transformative agenda. Yet this process and the ENP in reality rely heavily on structural measures such as technical assistance, promoting economic and legal reforms, and infrastructure development and are circumscribed by the EU's and third-countries' own interests (Browning & Christou 2010). While the EU is and can be a transformative actor particularly because of its economic power (Miall 2007), the consequences are not always as expected: economic development can exacerbate inequalities and democratic participation can cause greater rifts between ethnic groups (Smith 2008:170). Clancy and Nagle caution that because the EU emphasises "nation-building and the bolstering of institutions...it may end up merely facilitating minorities' access to majority cultures, as opposed to protecting minority cultures" (2009:16). It is also questionable to what extent socialisation alone can create positive and direct changes of behaviour (Kelley 2004; Sasse 2008a). For these reasons, policies and discourse must be sensitive to societal security and identity issues. Yet despite its interest in human rights and democracy, the ENP is about trade, investment, and a stake at an internal market as well as 'threats' at Europe's borders, prosperity, and regional stability (Commission 2003a:3-4). Consequently, the ENP is deficient in outlook to confront substantially inherent identity-related securitisation within its neighbours' potential conflict situations.

As worthy as the promotion is of justice and political and economic rights in conflict prevention, the ENP, as the other policies, is insufficient to counter the extreme politicisation of minority securitisation because priorities are dependent on the EU's own security needs and definitions. di Puppo voices concern that the EU's external relations policies contain a 'securitisation strategy' because it perceives itself as interdependent and vulnerable to threats from its neighbourhood (2009:113). This does not mean that the EU has created a state of securitisation, but that it feeds into the securitisation of minorities and likewise (Sasse 2005:684); this makes assisting desecuritisation all the more difficult. Echoing this, Jeandesboz warns "the management of insecurities has taken precedence over the promotion of peace through integration" (2007:409). For example, at first, the ENP offered its partner states all of the 'four freedoms' – movement of goods, services, capital, and persons – but the freedom of persons has disappeared and been replaced by references to more restrictive negotiated visa agreements (Sasse 2008a:301). While securitisation could be managed through meeting social, economic, and civil rights, the EU's external relations policies are not even promoting substantially these aspects of conflict prevention. The EU has misplaced its priority in its own security and borders, thereby focusing on state and technical programmes, and has chosen an unchallenging discourse; with these objectives in mind, it cannot sufficiently counter minority securitisation and assist in desecuritisation within minority rights-violating neighbours.

Conclusion

To summarise, EU conflict prevention policies promote an array of structural, operational, and short- and long-term measures. Operational conflict prevention measures, such as deployment of crisis management teams and diplomacy, play a prominent role; so much so that Miall states that these are the EU's conflict prevention priorities (2007:11). Nevertheless, the EU's most influential role plays out through its structural policies given the strength of its markets, political ideas, and system of governance (Ibid.). Initial hopes for structural prevention were strong, but aside from an emphasis on the security-development nexus (Commission 2005, 2008d), external relations are primarily concerned with state security and not societal security, let alone ideas of transformative practices. Conflict prevention has thus become synonymous with state security; the EU's discourse consequently speaks of its own security as dependent on the security of 'outsiders' (Smith 2005). It is a choice, as Buzan and Wæver explained, to talk about something in terms of security or not. The EU's policies, however, do not offer this choice.

This thesis now explores Georgia's experience under the ENP as a key example of how the EU is unwilling to counter discourses of societal securitisation in countries in crisis. The EU's relations with and approaches to Georgia leading up to the 2008 conflict demonstrate a lack of holistic recognition of the means to challenge minority securitisation. Despite the on-going, tense situations in the country's frozen conflicts, the EU continued to focus its external relations with Georgia primarily on the basis of economic development, border security, and democratic development. While these goals are part of a varied approach which can assist in minority desecuritisation, it also suggests a disregard for the sensitive issue of minority rights and the securitised identities that are institutionally present as key elements in the on-going crisis in the region. Likewise, its discourse of regional stability and its own security is counterproductive to effective engagement in more transformative forms of conflict prevention.

Chapter 3: EU in Georgia – the neglect of transformative conflict prevention

The EU's relationship with Georgia exemplifies the deficiency of transformative conflict prevention measures in its external relations. Despite two decades of involvement from the UN, OSCE, EU, and individual states, the international community has not approached the tensions in Georgia in a substantial way. The head of the EU's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG) places much of the blame for the outbreak of the 'predictable and preventable' 2008 war on the indifference of international organisations, including the EU. Their involvement "served to harden positions rather than to build common ground" and they ignored the genuine concerns of parties to the conflict (Tagliavini 2009). The IIFFMCG concluded that there are three main threats to peace in the Caucasus: the relationship with minorities; Georgia-Russia relations; and the 'geo-strategic' interests of international and regional players who compete for "political influence, access to energy supplies and other strategic assets" (2009 vol I:33). Therefore, part of the blame for the outbreak of conflict and its unresolved status is on the EU because it has not effectively confronted these concerns and has actually helped to create divisions in the region. This chapter further responds to the question of the EU's ability to assist substantially in the desecuritisation of minorities through its external relations, particularly when these relations are with neighbouring minority rights-violating states. Throughout its official relationship with Georgia, the EU's policies parallel and expose a number of the concerns analysed previously which have not made a counter discourse possible: the prominence of its own security concerns and misplaced assistance and priorities in the region; an unwillingness to engage in challenging identity issues; and a lack of vision to propose different narratives.

3.1 Georgia and minority rights: "gathering in the Georgian lands"
The promotion of minority rights is a challenging project in Georgia, particularly as minority groups have been subject to securitisation for so many years. Since Georgia's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, struggles for autonomy continue internally between the central government and the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and discrimination remains against other minorities. South Ossetians and Abkhazians have vocal ethnonational independence movements (Minorities at Risk 2009), but Georgia's territory also includes ethnonationalist Adjars along with a significant Azeri population in Kvemo Kartl, Armenians in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Greeks, and Russians.[12] In general, Georgia's minority populations have limited participation in cultural, social, economic, and public life; they face a lack of political representation; inadequate language rights, education, protection and civic rights; economic discrimination and inequality; and religious intolerance (CoE 2009). With Georgian independence, territorial integrity became the utmost concern, and throughout the 1990s, the government promoted the Georgian ethnic identity of the state (MRG 2009a). After the 2003 Rose Revolution, President Saakashvili eased Tbilisi's relationship with the regions and minority populations, but the nationalist project and violent outbreaks continued as he aimed to "[gather] in the Georgian lands" (IIFFMCG 2009 vol II:55). With the belief of many

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[12] For more in-depth information and analysis of various minority groups see MRG 2009b.

Georgians that they should 'return' to their 'country of origin' and the authorities' scepticism and denial that discrimination exists, minorities continue to face inequality, xenophobia, and stereotyping (Popjanevski 2006:25,49-50). Despite ratification of the FCNM and other small improvements in minority regions, national unity takes priority over minority rights.

All sides in the conflicts, including the *de facto* administrations and Georgia, have at various times committed human rights violations and, despite a number of attempts at brokering peace, been unwilling to create a *détente* in their relationships (see Fuller 2007; Merlingen & Ostrauskaite 2009). With the support of international organisations however, various ministries and committees in Georgia have developed to assist minorities and their 'integration' (see UNAG 2010). These initiatives however are plagued by administrative incapacity and a "failure to challenge informal practices of discrimination" (MRG 2009b). Within Georgian institutions, political representation is disproportionately low; language rights have slowly improved through outside support, but language training focuses on learning the Georgian language instead of offering services in minority languages (MRG 2009a). In addition, Moscow's close and supportive relationship with the regions has also further alienated some minority groups from Tbilisi. This has provoked the Georgian government, allowing Russia's interference to justify its uncompromising position towards its own territorial integrity and against the breakaway states and, most strikingly, Georgia's shelling of South Ossetia in August 2008 (IIFFMCG 2009 vol III:7-8; Kakabadze 2008b).[13] This relationship causes further problems that will be analysed later in light of EU policies.

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse the extent to which minorities are securitised within the state, Georgia is an evident example of a state with internal group tensions, minority rights violations, and secessionist and autonomous movements. The 2008 conflict challenged the EU's somewhat off-hands relationship with Georgia and, by association, its external relations and conflict prevention strategies. Even though this event was, in a sense, an interstate conflict between Russia and Georgia, it was a symptom of an array of minority rights issues within Georgia. Since then, the EU has had to increase dramatically its work there. Nevertheless, EU-Georgia relations before 2008 are a prime example of how deficient its external relations policies are in their ability to assist in minority desecuritisation.

3.2 EU-Georgia relations: a hands-off approach
The EU has been an important financial source for Georgia, albeit a marginal actor in conflict resolution mechanisms prior to the 2008 conflict (Commission 2008b). From 1999 to 2003, under the Partnership and Cooperation agreement (PCA), the EU provided mainly technical and financial assistance in the rehabilitation of water, gas and electricity supply, railways, and school buildings and battling the small arms and drug trades (Commission 2001:14,16,17). In 2003, with a change in government, Georgia's political scene opened up, and, as Georgia welcome increased EU involvement, the EU recognised the need for more active interest in the area (Commission 2003b:8). It moved into the issues of rule of law, support for civil society, poverty reduction, and conflict resolution and appointed an EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus (EUSR) whose role is to support political and economic reform, assist in border

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[13] According to the IIFFMCG, Georgia initiated the August 2008 hostilities, although the outbreak was also a result of increased tensions, incidents, and provocations from Russia.

management, encourage regional cooperation, and contribute indirectly to the prevention and settlement of conflicts (Council 2006). The EU's focus developed from 2004 to 2006 to include reforming the justice system, food security, offering macro-financial assistance for balance of payments problems, and assisting infrastructure projects such as a hydro-power complex (Commission 2007b:24,50). Since the closure in 2005 of the OSCE Border Monitoring Operation, the EU assists with a small replacement Border Support Team. Finally, in 2006, Georgia joined the ENP and the promotion of short- and medium-term confidence-building measures in support of conflict resolution gained some prominence.

Despite these measures, throughout the decade after its initial 1999 PCA, the EU left the steering of conflict resolution and negotiations to the UN and OSCE. Since the early 1990s, they assisted instead in negotiations, ceasefire agreements, and peacekeeping operations. The EU had peripheral functions in the Joint Control Commission (JCC) that oversaw the Russian-led peacekeeping operation in South Ossetia and the UN-led Group of Friends of Georgia that aims to help facilitate conflict resolution between Georgia and Abkhazia. Besides the presence of the EUSR, the ENP remained the only bilateral terms of engagement the EU had with Georgia. By the time of the outbreak of conflict in 2008, it was the largest monetary contributor in Georgia, but with a focus primarily in technical assistance, economic development, and a readiness for short-term crisis management. It was only after the 2008 outbreak of violent conflict that the EU realised a role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Commission 2009b). The EU stepped forward as a peace broker and, almost immediately after the ceasefire, an operational civilian ESDP EU Monitoring Mission set up in the conflict area. Still, the EU over this period maintained a clear technical and financial role with little concern for engagement in local conflict concerns.

3.3 EU strategies: failure to transform

The 2008 conflict should not have surprised the EU. It was well aware of the crises underway internally in the regions; just a few months before, EUSR Peter Semneby, insisted that the conflicts in the region were not frozen but 'simmering' "just below the boiling point" (Kakabadze 2008a). Yet over the years the EU 'toned down' its view of the conflict situation despite Georgia's ballooning territorial defence budget (di Puppo 2009:111; Whitman & Wolff 2010:90). In May 2008, the External Relations Council barely criticised the parties involved in tensions and only reiterated its financial assistance and support for meetings and the ENP Action Plan (Council 2008b); the EU simply chose not to take sides (Fuller 2008) and maintained its hands-off approach for several reasons outlined below.

Despite its conflict prevention policy intentions, the EU cannot be effective when its strategic concerns take precedence. From the beginning, the EU's approach in Georgia focused on its own internal issues of interdependence and vulnerability. The EU sees Georgia through a 'security lens' (di Puppo 2009:105-106); as suggested previously by Jeandesboz, it is torn between duties and threats: of not wanting to destabilise the situation nor allowing spillover effects to occur from crime and conflict in the region. Thus, Merlingen and Ostrauskaite argue, the EU peacebuilding projects in Georgia failed because the EU was too apolitical and concerned over its own geopolitical interests in the area, such as energy resources and counterterrorism (2009:26). This section outlines the three main reasons of why, in practice, the EU is unable to deal substantially with minority securitisation: its concern for its own priorities and security

needs; its failure to focus its 'good life' measures appropriately in its external relations; and its inability and unwillingness to challenge entrenched discourses of securitisation.

The EU's misguided priorities and assistance

Over the years, the EU increasingly viewed the conflicts not as Georgia-Abkhazia or Georgia-South Ossetia but Georgia-Russia so that, as a consequence, its actions did not disturb EU-Russia relations. This is because in the region EU policies assume an overriding concern for oil and gas (Council 2008a:42; Fischer 2007:6). So when the EU took over border management in 2005, it sent a team whose numbers were only a small proportion of the OSCE's (Popescu 2009). It was pressure from Georgia that forced the EU during its ENP negotiations to include priority area 6 on the promotion of peaceful resolution of internal conflicts (di Puppo 2009:111; IIFFMCG 2009 vol II:57) which outlines a short list of measures that includes raising the issue of conflict settlement in EU-Russia political dialogue meetings. Yet, as fears of impending war in 2008 were voiced, the EU was "unwilling to commit to any actions that would set it in opposition to Moscow" (IIFFMCG 2009 vol II:30). It later strongly condemned Russia's actions after Georgia's aggression, but its relations with Russia continue to be of prime importance and the relationship still maintains an uneasy balance between the EU's own needs and its desire to maintain stability within the region. Likewise, despite the importance of political and social reform for minority rights, the EU cannot work with the entities lest it upset Tbilisi. Due to its own interests, the EU has not had much influence over the breakaway regions' pursuit and commitment to independence nor made a significant impact on Georgia's staunch views.

As a consequence, overall, its prevention policies focus on state-centric ideas instead of the internal grievances of the different minority and majority groups. Its interventions remain highly technical and its focus is intent on economic integration and assistance for state-building. Much of the EU's ENPI funding in Georgia invests in infrastructure rehabilitation projects, aid to internally displaced persons, rule of law and justice reform, and assistance in administrative capacity development to enable Georgia to adopt, implement, and enforce EU legislation (EC 2010). Before 2008, the EU spent over €30 million on rehabilitation and technical assistance projects in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Popescu 2009). Therefore, what it does support "as an important measure to build greater trust between the conflict-affected populations" are infrastructure rehabilitation projects and confidence-building activities in the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian zones of conflict (Commission 2009c). The work it lauds however is not based in the breakaway regions; other institutions, like the OSCE, ran projects it supported monetarily there (Commission 2008:7b). Granted, their territories are self-managed and, at times, their administrations have not been welcoming to institutions, so many initiatives do not spill over into those areas. Yet the EU has had infrequent contact with the authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and ENP agreements do not define their relationship.

This undefined and unchallenging political relationship is detrimental to the goal of conflict transformation. The EU's lack of political engagement with the authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is one reason their leaders give for the ineffectiveness of its projects (Sasse 2009:379). In addition, civil society and NGOs were absent from ENP Action Plan negotiations (Bosse 2007:52), which left out important points of view from the future vision for the region. For their part though, from 2000 to April 2009, the EIDHR funded a number of civil society

projects with the aim to promote minority rights and counter discrimination. Several of these focused on the minority regions of Adjara, Kvemo Kartli, and Samtskhe-Javakheti in Georgia. However, over the years, out of a total of over 160 projects in the country, only one project focused on South Ossetia (for victims of the Georgia-Ossetia conflict) and four diverse projects concentrated on Abkhazia (Commission 2006a, 2009d). While the EU must negotiate ENPI projects with governments, funds from the EIDHR can go directly to civil society without government intervention. Yet the EU neglected to channel more of these funds to groups in the breakaway states and to reach out to these areas, which demonstrates a serious lack of concern for transformative conflict prevention approaches. The ICG warns that larger economic and infrastructure development projects, which the EU is so fond of, will do little, as "none of this is likely to appease minorities' political grievances without policies that increase inclusion and participation" (ICG 2006b:2). The EU has not heeded this concern. It has been criticised for not engaging more fully in resolving disputes; for its lack of specific democratisation, governance, and human rights benchmarks and monitoring mechanisms; and an incoherent "discourse on values, their contents and significance" (Bosse 2007:52; ICG 2006a:i; Smith 2005:764-765). Instead, energy security, free market policies, crisis management, and the fight against crime, migration, terrorism, and corruption dominate, while democracy, rights, and rule of law are in second place. While some of these measures help to create a society that upholds minority rights and to offer the chance of 'good life' policies, it does little to challenge institutionalised securitisation and entrenched views of the actors involved.

The EU's unchallenging discourse
Transformation is a long-term process not only facilitated by better living conditions and civil and political rights, but also an effort to challenge discourse. From the beginning of its engagement with Georgia, the EU has been faithful to the idea of Georgia's "independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity" (EU 1999). While this commitment is in line with international law, the consistent assertion of this policy lacks conflict sensitivity. The breakaway regions believe that the EU is working for Georgian interests and will take away their *de facto* independence (Coppieters 2007:17); consequently, the EU's "overtures are ambivalently received at best" (Clancy & Nagle 2009:17). Unintentionally or not, the EU has worked around the conflict, with little direct involvement in challenging roles or facilitating negotiations. This is detrimental to conflict prevention and minority desecuritisation. Yet the EU retains a naïve belief in its potential for true conflict transformation through Europeanisation. Calling the South Caucasus a 'broken region', EUSR Semneby declared that it lacks a 'common identity' and that the EU could help remedy this situation:

> Given the rivalries between and inside the countries, this identity has to be larger than the region itself...An additional layer of identity, a European identity, is what comes to mind here. For such an identity, or for such a layer of identity to work as a catalyst for bringing this broken region together again, the countries and the communities in the region need, however, to understand that this identity is based on much more than just interests, but is fundamentally based on common values. (Lobjakas 2007a)

Yet the EU cannot hide behind this hope and ignore the true realities and complexities in society. As a seminar in 2007 attended by representatives of the regions and international actors pointed out, all parties maintain a victim mentality along with entrenched points of view and desire for control over projects to the detriment of opening up channels of cooperation with like-minded groups on all sides of the borders (Fischer 2007:5). What matters then sometimes more than the process and goals of policies are the perceptions of them by the different actors. Georgia and the EU view Georgia's attempts at economic rehabilitation in South Ossetia as a 'charm offensive' that can help to create a positive attitude towards Georgia in the region (Ibid.). However, the breakaway regions believe that increased living standards could deteriorate relations with Georgia, as they prefer the strong economy of Russia to the strong central governance of Tbilisi. Economic attractiveness is not a substitute for political engagement, nor, as Coppieters points out, will it assist conflict transformation when a conflict is perceived to be about identity and grievances (2007:19). Some Abkhazians and South Ossetians have little faith in Georgia's "willingness to grant them political rights and to preserve their cultural and linguistic autonomy" and guarantee minority rights (Fischer 2007:8), so a factor such as economic development cannot necessarily take precedence over other social factors. This is why, counter to the EU's reasoning, they believe that without dialogue on political autonomy, language, culture, and political participation, economic development will not advance (Ibid.:4). An Abkhaz envisioned peace plan in 2006 stated its top priorities as an official Georgian apology to Abkhazia for its "state policy of assimilation, war, and isolation" and broad regional cooperation, including Abkhaz participation in the ENP (Fuller 2008). The EU cannot ignore entreaties such as this. Yet it has never engaged in a dialogue with the parties on the origins of the conflicts nor their responsibilities (Coppieters 2007:13). This situation unfortunately does not help to create an environment for transformative possibilities for the conflicts.

Recently, the EU has adopted a new catchphrase policy for its relationship with the breakaway regions: 'non-recognition and engagement'. This approach maintains and reiterates the EU's support for Georgia's territorial integrity, but, positively, it proposes that the EU engage more with the regions than it has in the past. There is a clear mandate, however, to avoid any actions being "misinterpreted as a step towards creeping recognition of the separatist territories" (Semneby 2009). The EU plans "to reestablish personal links, to develop joint interests, which are to large extent economic interests...[and] it could involve measures related to social issues, healthcare, focusing on communities on the both sides and also IDP [internally displaced persons] community" (Civil Georgia 2010). Yet again EUSR Semneby repeats EU support for infrastructure projects and affirms its 'special relationship' with Russia regarding energy issues, such as security and diversification, in the region (Ibid.). In addition, despite the initial surge of enthusiasm for the EU's work after the conflict, at present, the political process has stalled (Whitman & Wolff 2009:93). The EU is not moving in a direction that could assist substantially minority desecuritisation and its failure to change makes it imperative that the EU recognises the need to develop and foster alternatives that will assist with structural and transformative conflict prevention.

Conclusion

What this section shows is the importance of institutional engagement in confronting identity issues in places where minority securitisation is present and minority rights violations occur. As minority rights are an important component in conflict prevention, external relations must recognise this connection in order to create 'peace, security, and stability'. Structural policies are helpful, but they are insufficient if they do not also coincide with a concerted effort to challenge the tone and discourse of securitisation. The EU cannot continue infrastructure projects, democratic and economic development, and conflict settlement initiatives without engaging all actors – no matter the legal status of the breakaway regions – in the root causes of conflict, dealing with grievances, and countering ingrained identity issues. As well, a focus primarily on strategic interests is counterproductive to the transformation of conflict and desecuritisation of minorities. Clearly, the EU is not the only international actor in Georgia and it is the responsibility of all parties – external organisations, governments, politicians, and civil society – to assist in the transformation of a society away from securitisation. Yet the EU must be held responsible for not offering alternative discourses, entrenching divisions, and maintaining misguided views of the conflicts.

Conclusion

First, this thesis charted the development of minority rights as a tool in conflict prevention – a tool that can assist in preventing disputes from escalating into significant violence. Using this important relationship within its analysis of violent conflict, it connected ideas of critical security studies to understand how minority rights violations are part of a process of securitisation. It showed how, when minorities are framed as an existential threat because of their supposed aspirations, extreme measures utilised by the state that violates minority rights can lead to the escalation of violent conflict. Within this frame, the thesis highlighted the saliency of identity as a key factor in the process of minority securitisation. Therefore, it argued, as an issue of societal security, it is the construction of identity that must be confronted in order to desecuritise and prevent the escalation of conflict. It proposed that this can be done through a return or move towards 'normal' politics and by deinstitutionalising the exceptionalism of securitisation. By reconnecting the issues of minority rights and conflict prevention, it underlined the long-term, deep structural and transformative conflict prevention outlooks and policies that are required in order to support minority rights and counter the extreme politicisation of issues and identities. This is done through 'good life' policies, but also, most importantly, through the promotion of alternative discourses and different interpretations that can challenge salient identity issues.

Wider implications

It should be understood that the minority-security nexus is not an inevitable fact in societies. Instead, critical security studies offers, through the recognition of situations as security-minded, a redemptive alternative because it acknowledges that attitudes, actions, and discourse can change. What needs to occur first however is an admission that something has been framed as a security issue; then, the next step is to desecuritise the issue in order to lessen the possibility that the situation will turn to violent conflict. The act of desecuritising minorities does not suggest that this alone can help to deescalate a situation away from violent conflict; rather, it is part of a holistic conflict prevention and external relations strategy that institutions must adopt. Yet without understanding the perils of securitised action and discourse, the right balance of policies and words may not be used to counter securitisation. With this in mind, strategies can be scrutinised and revised in order that they challenge substantially securitisation. While the analysis in this thesis focused on the case of the EU and Georgia, a critical security analysis should be applied to other tense situations in order to uncover the presence of societal security concerns and minority securitisation and to assist in recognising the need for structural and transformative policies.

The research also suggests that all actors, including civil society, communities, politicians, businesses, and international organisations, must engage themselves in the surrounding environments through stronger intuitive roles in their work and sensitivity in their discourses. While institutions rhetorically defend the rights of minorities and principles of democracy, rule of law, justice, and economic development, their methods and interests are roadblocks to minority desecuritisation. External relations policies that focus on state security, particularly wider regional security concerns, work to the detriment of structural policies that can assist

with conflict prevention in societies where minority securitisation exists. Economic and political development do not automatically offer a discourse that can break through societal securitisation, so there must be clear policies, terms of engagement, and measured responses that will help bring parties together and counter strong antagonistic discourses. While there also must be present domestic conditions for accepting political and societal changes (Kelley 2004), when, for example, democratic standards are addressed, the analysis should not shy away from openly criticising regimes, irrespective of strategic importance. However, if blindsided by internal concerns and strategic relationships, institutions such as the EU will not be able to help transform societies away from securitised views on minorities and the status quos will remain.

EU policy recommendations

As the EU likes to point out, proactive conflict prevention is always cheaper than trying to rebuild after conflict; but the prevention of conflict is also a moral and political imperative (Commission 2001:5). However, the research demonstrated that the EU lacked a holistic conflict prevention strategy in Georgia and did not promote transformative discourses or policies. Now, the EU and other institutions must help to rebuild the country and to resolve tensions after the 2008 conflict. This thesis reiterated throughout the EU's responsibility to provide a better external relations strategy and holistic view of conflict prevention to assist in the desecuritisation of minorities. It is an important player in international relations and maintains an influential role in its relations with third-countries. However, it found that the EU's discourse is weak in challenging issues of identity and the securitisation of minorities through its external relations policies, despite its goals to promote peace, stability, and security. The EU maintains a narrow view of conflict prevention, which focuses primarily on its own internal security and strategic interests, offers misguided assistance, and its strategies are inadequate to deal with deeper issues relating to identity, grievances, and tensions. How can the EU approach minority conflict situations with only bricks and business managers? Without the desire to counter securitised discourses through working effectively across lines of division, it will not be able to assist in changing tense situations where societal security issues reign. EU-Georgia relations and the situation in Georgia demonstrated the incapacity and unwillingness of the EU to assist substantially in these issues despite criticisms against its lack of engagement and its naïve view that Europeanisation can assist in uniting these regions. Although to directly challenge the EU's entrenched ideas of its own security and priorities would be ideal, this thesis concludes with a few suggestions on how the EU can alter its internal arrangements to help it engage in transformative processes; that is, if the political will is present to challenge its own dependencies and assumptions about the parties in conflict.

First, there is the potential for foreign ministers and the foreign action service to provide a more consistent and proactive effort to assist in conflict prevention both in a short-term operational capacity and to advocate for the use of long-term structural policies in states and regions where the concern for minority securitisation is present. The eleven appointed EUSRs worldwide play an important direct conflict prevention role and "are considered to be of strategic importance for the EU" (Hughes 2009:280). After the 2008 conflict, the EU appointed a EUSR for the crisis in Georgia to assist in complementary conflict prevention diplomacy.

However, the EU's commitment to preventing conflict in this manner may be waning. Recent developments state that there are now plans to do away with the EUSRs in all but the most strategic regions for the EU's Member States. The representative in the South Caucasus in the end will only be a 'mid-level manager', not a diplomat, and Moldova and the Middle East peace process would lose their representatives as well (Lobjakas 2010b). These cuts may have a direct diplomatic, operational effect on how the EU can develop its people-to-people contact with these regions. The EUSRs are the representatives of EU policy, but are also there to offer advice as an insider. For example, while EUSR Semneby has voiced much of the EU's discourse of internal security as shown previously, he has also called on EU foreign policy to 'moderate' the unproductive rhetoric of the actors involved in the Georgian conflicts (Lobjakas 2006). If these roles remained, the EU would do itself a service if they offered the EUSRs more structural and transformative responsibilities. These representatives could oversee all EU initiatives, undertake conflict assessments, and offer more insider knowledge on how to make policies more conflict sensitive in order to fund projects in the most appropriate ways.

The EP, conferred with stronger legislative powers after the Lisbon Treaty, could perform more checks and balances by supervising and assessing the Commission's external relations practices and insisting on appropriate legislation. It can also use its authority to provide perspectives and positions on matters of minority rights and conflict prevention. For example, in a recent resolution on 'the need for an EU strategy for the South Caucasus,' the EP, while supporting much of the Commission and Council's work in the area, outlines some veiled criticisms of the current approach to the region. The document advocates for the use of cross-border programmes and dialogue as a conflict transformation tool, notes the important role the EU can play in dialogue in the region, and highlights the importance of minority rights. The EP also advocates for transformative work through dialogue that recognises:

> the rights and legitimate interests of all relevant parties and communities, openness to review perceptions of past events and reach a common understanding of past events, willingness to overcome hatred and fear...[and] considers it unacceptable for any external actors to introduce conditions for the respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the South Caucasus states. (2010:para. 2-5)

If heeded, the EP could have an influential role on the transformative processes of conflict prevention and provide the impetus to follow inclusive and long-term solutions. While it would be difficult to challenge the EU's entrenched discourse around internal security needs, its obsession with fears of cross-border crime and terrorism, and its equation of free market principles and economic development with stability and peace, the Commission and Council's work could take some leads from the EP's recommendations. For example, it can actively work with the breakaway regions while pointing out to the actors involved that not assisting could be detrimental to future security. The EU could ensure that future dialogues reach a deeper level on grievances rather than just interests. It also needs to reconsider its seemingly dependent relationship on Russia, as well as its unwavering support for Georgia's 'territorial integrity'. Included in this must be a promise of EU engagement in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; Abkhazia, more so, has shown a willingness to be a partner with the EU and to comply with its interests

(Civil Georgia 2010). The EU now needs to renew its 'duty' and review its approach to the region, otherwise, the EU's future potential to provide a basis for conflict transformation and minority desecuritisation in its neighbourhood, and, therefore, to prevent violent conflict, is severely limited.

Final remarks

The sentiment of this research defends the rights of minorities to enjoy fully the opportunity for political, civil, cultural, and economic engagement in the societies in which they live. Minorities should have rights to use their own language, to participate in political life, to have equal economic opportunity, and to possess free speech among many others. They should not be seen as a threat to state or societal security and their ambitions should not be used as an excuse for suppression in any form. While minority groups do not inevitably have the right to become unilaterally independent or autonomous within a territory, if the desire is there, then it must be acknowledged and debated in an open manner. The desecuritisation of minorities, as part of societal security, requires an approach that will allow for the proper acknowledgement of these issues. Escalating or present conflicts with underlying issues of minority discrimination must be confronted with not only structural preventative measures, but also policies that embody the goal to confront underlying identity issues maintained by various actors. Policies that are inclusive and build on the acceptance of minority rights and minority groups' aspirations may work to desecuritise minorities and lessen the chance of outbreaks of conflict. Offering alternative discourses and reconstructing the views towards these groups are the most important steps towards their desecuritisation and a true path to peace, security, and stability.

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