

# Europe in conflict!

## An analysis on the position of the EU when mediating between neighbouring countries.

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*Paper for the 2012-edition of the international (post)graduate course on Inclusion and Exclusion in Contemporary European Societies: 'Challenges of Europe, the Strength of Soft Power'.*

April 16-20, 2012 | Dubrovnik (Croatia)

[www.inclusionexclusion.eu](http://www.inclusionexclusion.eu)

## **Introduction**

On the night of 7 to 8 August Georgian troops left for South-Ossetia to re-occupy the capital of that area. Russian troops responded to this and a five-day war started. Nicolas Sarkozy, president of France, the country that was at that moment chairing the EU-council, left for Moscow to mediate, then towards Tbilisi and after five days a cease-fire agreement was a fact. It was signed by Georgian side on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August and by Russian side on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August. A story of success?

How to analyse the position of the EU when mediating? First I will draw an outline of mediation; definition, pro's and con's, common practices and important characteristics when mediating internationally. Based on these answers I will formulate an answer to the important question: "why should the EU aim at being a successful mediator?" (chapter II, pp. 3-5).

Then, based on the cases of the Russian-Georgian war and the conflict in Cyprus, the position of the EU as mediating institution will be discussed by three major issues concerning the EU in mediations:

1. How do soft power and hard power correlate (Chapter III, pp. 6-7)?

In this chapter there will be looked at the influence of the EU's power sources on its own position within a mediation and in what way the power it wields is influencing the power it will have in future mediations.

2. How do the perception of neutrality and safeguarding the own interests correlate? (chapter IV, pp. 8-10)

In the part the factors influencing the perception of neutrality shall be discussed. Besides that the EU can have an own interest in the conflict. How does this influence the mediation process?

3. In what way are the individual member states influencing the mediation process of the total? (chapter V, p. 10)

The influence of the individual member states on the mediation process can be quite large. Here their influence will be discussed.

After the discussion on the three key issues, the new EEAS (European External Action Service; an institution for foreign policy and diplomacy) will be introduced in the perspective of the previous chapters (chapter VI, p. 11). Is the EEAS possibly the lift over the obstacles introduced in chapter III, IV and V and are there other more promising options? A summary will round up of the paper (chapter VII, p. 12-13) and provide an answer to the question: *How can the position of the EU as a mediator in the neighbourhood be evaluated?*

## **Chapter II: Mediation Internationally**

When analysing mediating a few distinctions have to be made. How does mediation fit in the conflict resolution instruments and what are the pro's and con's of mediation?

Mediation has many definitions, but a few elements stay the same. It is a process in which two or more parties are trying to resolve a conflict on their own, guided in their negotiation and in their communication by a professional neutral third, the mediator, in order to get a durable solution fitting to the "real" interests of both parties (Prein, 2001: 221-223; Schonewille, 2012: 28).

The elements of mediation are, according to multiple scholars the following:

- Process: there is a strong structure in mediation, since the parties are usually in conflict for over some time and therefore stuck in certain patterns of behaviour. By a new structure these patterns can be overstepped (Giebels & Euwema, 2010: 189-193).
- Conflict: is a conflict required for a mediation? That depends on the definition of a conflict. A conflict is defined by Prein as a difference in roles, interests, goals or important values as perceived by at least one of multiple parties and that a party also needs to start acting based on this difference (2001: 9).
- On their own: the conflict parties themselves are required to have an active mentality in a mediation. When parties think the mediator will solve the problem for them, they will deny their responsibility in the process.
- Neutral mediator: mediators are not stating that they are perfectly neutral in their perception during the process. However, it is required that the mediator must be perceived as neutral and his or her perception may not influence the process at any time (Huguenin, 2004: 124, 130).
- Real interests: even though it is impossible to state what "real interests" are, this part is necessary to state the difference with conciliation. In mediation the mediator tries to listen to

the interest (“why is this important to you?”) underlying a position (“I want the house!”). By asking about interest the total value that is divided between the parties (the “pie) can be enlarged (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1991: 71-128. This also increase the chance on durable solutions, since parties have their interests covered or clarity about what to expect from other parties.

Some other elements are also mentioned, but these are agreed upon by most of the scholars (Crawley & Graham, 2002: 14-18; Giebels & Euwema, 2010: 184-185, 189-193; Prein, 2001: 221-223; Schonewille, 2012: 31-32; Schutte & Spierdijk, 2011: 49-50, 69-73).

The reason of the elements can be found in the science of neuropsychology. A human can respond to perceived aggression by fight-flight (adrenaline) and tend & befriend (oxytocine). When people are in fight-flight mode, they are not caring for the other party. Oxytocine has the opposite effect; it results in listening, acknowledgement and concessions. In order for people to get in the tend & befriend mode, they need to feel safe, respected and listened to. Therefore there is a process required with a neutral third, helping parties towards a solution for their real interests (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011:11-19; Taylor, Klein, Lewis, Gruenewald, Gurung & Updegraff, 2000).

Why is mediation promising on international level?

First of all, mediation is working for the specific individual. It puts the power at the parties themselves and cultural aspects can be flexibly taken into account.

Secondly, mediation is fast. Especially comparing to jurisdiction, which takes at least a year, and mediation which might be done in a day, the plus there is easily seen.

Final, mediation is confidential. Parties can name their interests and their mistakes, since what is stated in a mediation stays there (2008/52/EG, art. 7).

Downsides of mediation can be found in an article by Vranken (2005). He states that mediators might have a to positive image of the conflict parties. Parties are not always capable of reflecting on their own interests, position and communication, just as on the interests and perception of the other party. If for instance one president is not capable of understanding the importance of status for another president, then how can he or she respond constructively?

Second, what are real interests and who will judge the results? If in the end there is an agreement, then does that mean that the mediation for successful?

A final downside, which can also be found at the pro's, is the confidentiality. A person may want to have a public verdict (Schonewille, 2012).

Why would the EU want to mediate?

Even though the pro's of mediation on international level are strong, that does not explain why the EU should mediate. The value for the EU can be found in their *raison d'être* and the power they receive by mediating, besides from the ethical reasons of disagreeing to other forms of conflict and protecting certain countries from other countries.

The EU started as a response to the WWII; the idea that a third war had to be prevented at any cost. By negotiation, discussion and consensus conflicts had to be solved. This goal has never changed, even though other interests have now also been stated in the EU, such as economical and environmental issues (N.B. the EU started on an economic basis, but with the goal of preventing a war. Now the economical basis is a goal on its own). Therefore, by mediating in conflicts the EU is giving itself a reason to exist.

Besides the *raison d'être*, the EU is increasing its power through mediation (Christou, 2004, 2011; Coppieters, Emerson, Huyseune, Kovziridze, Noutcheva, Tocci & Vahl, 2004; Tocci, 2004, 2007). By using soft power the EU becomes more attractive to other countries. The EU influences other countries with their values and demands changes in the values in order to become a part of the EU (Hill, 2001; Diez, Albert & Stetter, 2008). With using soft power, the attraction increases and with that the amount of soft power the EU wields (Nye, 2008). With mediation the EU increases its own attraction, negotiation position and perceived power over the globe (Smith, 2006).

Helping others and protect smaller countries is a more contested argument. Some writers state that the EU is being a good world power with helping other countries, while other writers talk about the EU trying to duplicate its own culture in other countries in a negative way (Hyde-Pryce, 2008; Bicci, 2006).

. My opinion is that mediation itself can be good, since it allows cultural differences and parties have the choice to back down at any moment. Whether the EU should put pressure on countries to join mediation is a second question. Even though many (70-80%) mandatory mediation processes are successful according to Fred Schonewille (14-05-2012)(output-ethics), I don't neglect the dominating effect of one culture over another (input-ethics).

### **Chapter III: Soft power vs. Hard power**

Now a clear image of mediation has been given, it is time to look at the EU as mediator. What could make the EU a good mediating institution and how do the two cases show this?

As explained in the previous chapter, the EU increases its soft power (influence without force (Smith, 2006: 20, inspired on Nye (2004)) with wielding soft power successfully. When looking at the world stage, the EU is one of the strongest soft-power wielders. By using a lot of soft power and being an example of soft power by its own structure, the EU has a positive aura (Smith, 2006). It can influence other countries without force. The strength of the EU soft power can be seen in its influence on countries without a membership (Niemann & De Wekker, 2010; Smith. 2006).

The problem that occurs with soft power, is that if soft power is not enough, there is no real lasting alternative. When an issue is so important that you are using hard power after using soft power, then your soft power will decrease for the coming conflicts (decrease in moral high ground, decrease in attraction, less trustworthiness (Forsberg, 2011). The solution of this on world stage lies in a division of tasks and power. The US is taking part in the hard power (less under president Obama), while the EU is talking part in the soft power (Bressand, 2011; Nye, 2002). Since the US put pressure on a country, it is more likely that the EU will be allowed to mediate in conflicts. Therefore multiple scholars speak of the EU waiting for the US before acting and afraid of drawing an own line (Niemann & De Wekker, 2010: 29). The soft power also has another downside. The attraction that can come with the use of soft power can also work unwillingly; a country can change its behaviour into something perceived as preferable by the EU, while the EU itself does not wish that change. For instance, when the EU is mediating, it is possible that one of the parties is giving in, in order to please the EU.

In the conflict between Russia and Georgia the president of Georgia (Saakashvili) had expressed the wish to join NATO and the EU. When president Sarkozy of France, chairing the European Council at that moment (Nußberger, 2009), spoke to him in order to get a cease-fire agreement, Sarkozy was at the same time a window of opportunity for Saakashvili to get closer connections to the EU and NATO. Therefore the Russian side had an advantage in the mediation. Important to mention here is that the EU did not have the wish to include Georgia in the EU for quite some time. Not stating this therefore was giving a representation of the

attractiveness of giving in and might not have satisfied the “real interests” of Georgia as much as was expected (Niemann & De Wekker, 2010: 30).

The influence of hard power can be found in the aftermath of the conflict. Even though both parties signed the agreement, it was not lived up to, until the US prepared military units to be airlifted out of Iraq to Georgia. At the same time military vessels were sent towards the Black Sea. The Russians then started withdrawing troops out of the occupied Georgian territory (Whitman & Wolff, 2010).

The attraction of the EU and a possible membership had a similar effect on the Cyprus-conflict. Cyprus (both north and south) had expressed the wish to join the EU, as had Turkey (occupying the northern part of Cyprus). Both sides were calm and willing to have an active and positive approach towards mediation, since it could increase their chances of becoming a EU candidate member-state. A problem in this conflict was the difference in institutions: the decision-making process about candidate member-states was made apart from the mediation process. Therefore during the mediation one of the parts (southern part) was granted candidate membership before the northern part and Turkey. The northern part ended the active and positive approach, since they felt the EU had chosen sides (Christou, 2004; Fisher, 2001). When the EU granted Turkey membership also and changed its agreement with the southern part of Cyprus into “the whole of Cyprus, with a delay to the northern part”, the mediation process slowly got on track again (Christou, 2011).

Looking at the cases, we can see that hard power and soft power cannot be combined by one institution, since the use of hard power diminishes the soft power use in the future. It can be successful when multiple institutions combine their power. The USA can put pressure on a country in order to persuade it to join a conversation with the EU and the USA can put pressure on the actual implementation of agreements made by the EU. Also the EU provides some legitimacy for the USA hard power (Smith, 2006; Bressand, 2011).

The EU has to take care for the unwilling consequences of its own attraction, since countries might act on behalf of the EU before knowing what the EU actually wants. Not being clear as EU in the perception of the conflict parties in relation to the EU can provide an uneven balance in yielding-behaviour (Niemann & De Wekker, 2010). The EU also has to be careful for the multiplicity of institutions with different decisions connected to the perception of its neutrality.

#### **Chapter IV: Neutrality vs. Own interest.**

As the previous case in Cyprus turned out, the perception of choosing sides can turn the mediation process in a stalemate. The ethical question here is whether the EU as mediation institution *can* be the professional neutral third party in a conflict, when trying to resolve a conflict in the neighbourhood and whether the EU should *want* to be.

First of all, following Cobb and Rifkin (1991) it is not possible to be both neutral and include your own interests in the process of mediation. Countries in the neighbourhood have a relation with the EU and therefore stating EU interest will on its own influence the mediation process

Second, related to the previous is the confidentiality of the mediation process. That means, theoretically, that whatever the two parties decide upon, the EU member-states should not take notice of the outcome (they are not part of the conflict). Even though the mediator can ask for a mandate to communicate to the EU (and with that also the individual member-states), this might put additional pressure on the mediation process. What if, in the mediation process, the two countries decide on doing something that has a negative effect on the EU (for instance, Russia and Georgia decide to close all energy transport towards the EU)? The mediator has a strange position, since he/she already knows this information, but may not report it towards its own employer following the EU guideline (2008/52/EG).

Third, following Vranken's criticism on mediation (2005), what would the "real interests" be of the EU? The EU is a body of multiple member states that settle their difference in interests, goals and values within the EU-institutions. How can an EU-mediator be able to include its own real interests? It cannot, but it can represent a perspective of a part of the EU with some certainty. This can however have the effect on the internal EU-conflicts (more on that in chapter V).

Looking at the case of Cyprus, we noticed that the actions of multiple EU institutions influenced the mediation process in a negative way, since a neutral part of the EU (the mediator) and an own-interest part (the decision process involving EU-membership) were both involved at the same time (Fisher, 2001; Tocci, 2004). Since many will not perceive the



EU institutions as two different ones according to Peterson (1995, 1997<sup>1</sup>, 2001), but state that they are both part of the same institution (EU), the perception of neutrality can be gone quickly. This problem is hard to overcome, since both institutions follow a structure which is agreed upon by treaty (Peterson, 1997<sup>2</sup>).

In the Russia-Georgia war a different way of neutrality vs own interests can be found. Russia was not willing to live up to the agreements of the cease-fire agreement at first. Why not? As explained in chapter II and III the EU could not use hard power in this conflict. Some countries (Poland, Baltic states, UK) responded negative towards Russia, while other countries (France and Germany) quickly exclaimed to stay neutral within the process (Niemann & De Wekker, 2010). When Sarkozy was mediating in Russia he could not represent EU-interests, since part of the EU had criticized the actions of Russia and another part had stated to stay neutral. Russia did not have to fear a EU-based action, since the EU would not reach consensus internally about that (Coppieters, 2007).

Second, the neutral member states were dependent on Russian energy sources (Miháliková, 2010: 75). The mediation literature calls this principle *leverage*: the perceived power of the other parties over you (Schonewille, 2012: 281-283). More leverage means you are perceived as stronger than the party perceives itself. By the energy supplies Medvedjev had some leverage over Sarkozy (Mikhelidze, 2009; Niemann & De Wekker: 13-14). It did not have to fear the EU and had leverage over them. Georgia on the other hand had not; it wished to join the EU and faster than the EU wanted to integrate Georgia within its network (Coppieters, 2007). The approach of Russia towards the EU of delay and demand can be explained in the light of these findings.

Could the EU have tried to balance the power in the Russia-Georgia conflict? Besides the ethical question whether the EU should want to include itself in other countries conflicts, there are also some practical issues involved.

To begin with, the perception of neutrality is gone when balancing the power (Huguenin, 2008; Schonewille, 2012: 174-176). Georgia knows that the EU is supporting them and will increase its demands. Russia sees the EU as an enemy and might retaliate on it.

Conductively, the mediator has to be perceived as dominant over the conflict parties in order to stay both mediator and shift the power balance (Huguenin, 2008). If not, then the mediator

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to “The European Union: pooled sovereignty, divided accountability”

<sup>2</sup> Refers to “States, societies and the European Union”

will be put at the side of the weaker party (as an enemy of the stronger party) and not taken seriously as a mediator. Also a retaliation is more likely, since a country is still in adrenaline-mode (chapter II).

In summary, the neutrality and own interests are not combinable, since the interest of the EU are likely to influence the perception on their neutrality in the mediation process. The perception of choosing sides can bring the process in a stalemate (as in the Cyprus-conflict). At the same time the interests of the EU can be used to manipulate the process. When a country has leverage over the EU, it can influence the result. When the EU wants to influence the power balance of a conflict, it must be have leverage over both parties, since the EU will be perceived as an enemy by the stronger party. Without dominance retaliation will follow and there will be no pressure to continue mediation (for as far as that is possible in adrenaline-mode).

### **Chapter V: Unitary vs. Individual member states**

A third question rising from the EU as a mediator, is who is represented. As mentioned in the previous chapter, different reaction towards the Russia-Georgia conflict reduced the leverage of the mediator. The questions who the mediator should be, who it represents and what it should stand for are answered differently with impeding results.

In Russia Sarkozy was seen as the French President (instead of chairman of the European Council). This did give Medvedjev some leverage, since France already claimed to stay neutral and France was dependent on Russian energy (Mikhelidze, 2009; Niemann & De Wekker: 13-14). Sarkozy, by acting neutral, did not represent the part of the EU that wanted to act more aggressively.

The questions who the mediator should be and what it should stand for, has reached the higher EU levels a few years ago (Whitman & Wolff, 2010). A new institution for the implementation of foreign policy and diplomacy (the European External Action Service (EEAS)) is now in service.

## **Chapter VI: EEAS - ready for action?**

The EEAS is now the new diplomacy institution of the EU. As stated by Whitman & Wolff (2010) this resolves the question who should mediate. However, the questions what it should stand for and what the “real interests” of the EU are, are still unanswered.

One option is that the EEAS is allowed to take decisions on EU interests and positions. This will lead to a quicker interference and a strong mediator, who can enforce respect with the conflict parties. It also provides a solution for the different institutions on EU-level interfering with the mediation process.

Downsides are that the legitimacy of such an institution will be low, since the policy of the EEAS is not agreed upon by the individual member-states and many institutions have a different opinion (Peterson, 1995, 1997, 1997, 2001). This decrease in consensus is a reduction in soft power, which will also decrease the high soft-power status that the EU has on the world stage (Haukkala, 2007, 2007). Additionally the individual member-states might openly attack the EEAS on some decision it takes, since each country still has its own foreign policy, history and bonds. If for example, the EEAS-mediator would take a decision in advantage of the northern part of Cyprus, the Greek politicians will be forced to criticize this decision. It is the question whether individual member-states will rest their case or start an own attempt of conflict resolution when this occurs.

Not allowing the EEAS to take decision on interest and positions, will lead towards a slow process. Since conflicts are usually unexpected and require quick interference, this downside might be crucial for mediating.

Looking at this, is the EU really able to mediate in the neighbourhood or should they leave this to other actors? The UN is the most recognizable actor in this field. They represent (nearly) all countries a bit, which equalizes (nearly) all countries not at all. On the other hand they do also lack hard power and countries that provide hard power decrease the UN's neutrality; the same problem the EU has (Honeyman & Yawanarajah, 2003).

## **Chapter VI: Draw up the balance-sheet**

So far we've seen that the EU is a strong soft-power wielder and therefore a possible good mediator (Bressand, 2011; Haukkala, 2007, 2007; Smith, 2006). The lack of hard power possibilities is compensated by the hard power of the USA so far (Forsberg, 2011; Nye, 2002, 2004)

The attraction of the EU and the lack of clarity it gives towards possible member-states or candidate member-states also has some followings. Countries might give in easier. At the same time countries that have leverage over the EU can influence the mediation process to their advantage (Coppieters et al., 2004; Niemann & De Wekker, 2010; Schonewille, 2012) The member-states of the EU all have their own foreign policy and history, but therefore also a different position when a conflict occurs (Tocci, 2004, 2007). In combination with the different EU-institutions that are working parallel (Peterson, 1995, 1997, 1997, 2001), this gives the mediator a difficult position, since his/her power decreases, the neutrality is questioned and unexpected happenings might lead a promising process into a stalemate.

What can be improved within the EU is the way in which it unwillingly influences the mediation process. By being clear about its perception on the relationship with countries in the neighbourhood and by internal communication over issues that might influence the position of the mediator, some steps can be made to decrease the difficulty of the obstacle course (Niemann & De Wekker, 2010). The EEAS itself might embody these steps, but that depends on the development of the EEAS (Whitman & Wolff, 2010). In that process the EU member-states have some difficult choices to make. Do they want to influence the outcome of a mediation process? Do they want to add their own interests in a mediation process in the neighbourhood? Do they want to allow the EEAS to take decision on behalf of all member-states?

Answers to the questions have shown to have both pros and cons. These cons have to be taken for granted, since there does not seem to be a better alternative; not within the EU, not the UN (Honeyman & Yawanarajah, 2003) and not with other conflict resolution methods. This might give a negative image of mediation on international level, and that image is mostly right. However, what we must not forget, is that mediation is still a better option than all the other alternatives (law, force, arbitration) at the moment. Churchill once spoke about democracy as

“the worst form of government, except for all the other forms that have been tried from time to time”. The same can be said about the mediation process on international level.

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