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MA Thesis

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The Role of Civil Society Organisations in Ethnic Conflict Resolution in Georgia: Challenges and opportunities

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Abstract

Ethnic conflicts in Georgia have almost 30-year-long history. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, two Georgian regions – Abkhazia and Samachablo (so called South Ossetia) claimed independence. These two regions were/are militarily and politically supported by Russia. International actors and organisation like UN, EU and OSCE have also participated in round table meetings between the parties. However all of negotiations at the official level have failed to resolve the conflicts. Instead, Georgia and Russia do not have diplomatic relations with each other and waged war in 2008. Hence, it is of huge significance to look into the opportunities and challenges for the civil society organisations in the process of conflict transformation.

Therefore the aim of the thesis is to contribute to the existent literature about the challenges and opportunities faced by civil society organisations (CSOs) while working for ethnic conflict resolution in Georgia. The main focus was to analyse the role and the activities of the CSOs to discuss the problems that hinder them from conducting productive projects in the conflict regions. The research has shown that civil society organisations face common challenges, which have different solutions according to the characteristics of the problem. The thesis is a good basis for further research on the issue of the ethnic conflicts in Georgia.

Contents

Introduction

Since ancient times nations have been fighting each other and at the same time they have been trying to find solutions to end conflicts. Parties to international conflict can resolve conflict by themselves without other actors' participation. However, in practice, it is rare to find cases, when conflict was resolved without third party/parties involvement. Before the twentieth century, only state officials participated in the negotiations for the conflict resolution. However political officials can not always find ways to resolve conflicts, because of the lack of possibilities they have. For example, when negotiation has an official status, it limits the format of the negotiation and the possibilities to achieve conflict resolution become limited as well. Thus, as the officials could not find solutions to different disputes, during the twentieth century other (non political) actors got involved in negotiation processes. When the format of the negotiation becomes unofficial, it creates wider range of opportunities to bring the parties to conflict together in order to find possible ways of ending the conflict.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are one type of unofficial actors that can be involved in conflict resolution. There are some examples where CSOs actively participated in conflict resolution process and even succeeded in finding peaceful resolution of the conflict (Northern Irish, Guatemalan, Oslo accords and other cases). The main strength of civil society organisations is that they are able to bring conflict sides to the negotiation table, more easily and successfully than the state officials. As already mentioned negotiations on official level are limited in some circumstances, while CSOs are free from those limitations. They can even work on individual level (with individuals within the society) and while public official negotiations are oriented on public officials, civil society organisations focus mostly on society. Although CSOs organise negotiation meetings on unofficial level, the ideas they generate about conflict resolution can later pave the way to official treaties and agreements between the adversaries.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new ethnic conflicts have arisen in Eastern Europe (especially in post-Soviet states). In the post-communist world, conflicts fuelled by ethnic issues can be found in Ukraine (Crimea and Eastern Ukrainian conflict), in the Caucasus (Nagorno Karabakh conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis; Abkhazian conflict between Abkhazians and Georgians; Samachablo conflict (so called "South Ossetia") between Georgians and Ossetians, and so on). Various international organizations such as United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) send peacekeeping missions to those territories and try to find solutions to the conflicts by implementing policies in those countries where ethnic conflicts or tensions take place. Some of these policies concentrate on official negotiations, while others focus on civil societies and try to find ways of conflict resolution through bringing civil societies from rival sides together. In the process of conflict resolution civil society organisations (CSOs) are also actively involved.

Analysing the role of civil society organisations in the conflict resolution in the Georgian case demonstrates the challenges that CSOs face when engaged in conflict resolution. Discussing the activities of those CSOs shows what/who the organisations' focus was in each case and what were the aims and the outcomes. Such an analysis makes it possible to understand what the real opportunities for resolving the conflict are from the perspective of the civil society organisations and what should be done to achieve better results.

The involvement of civil society organizations in ethnic conflict resolution is the main focus of this thesis. The aim is to analyse how CSOs are involved in conflict resolution process, what opportunities exist for them, what activities are carried out by them, what achievements they have in this process and what obstacles they face. Specifically the focus of the thesis is on two ethnic conflicts in Georgia – the conflict of Abkhazia and that in Samachablo (so called "South Ossetia"). The thesis studies the phases of these conflicts and concentrates on the involvement of the CSOs in this conflict. Nine local and three foreign most active civil society organisations are analysed according to their involvement in conflict resolution in Georgia. These CSOs are categorised in four groups according to their type, goals and activities. Analysis shows in what cases these CSOs succeeded in

achieveing their goals (goal of the concrete programme or the goal of the organisation in general), what obstacles they faced and what are the opportunities to actively be involved in conflict resolution with positive outcomes. Both conflicts in Georgia arose after the dissolution of Soviet Union and continue to the present day. Despite the fact, that Russia is one of the main factors of these conflicts (both conflicts were provoked by Russia and Russian military troops participated in the conflicts on Abkhazian and Ossetian side), analysing Russia's role in Georgian ethnic conflicts is out of scope of this thesis. Russia further stimulated the situation in Abkhazia and Samachablo that was already tense. Ethnically motivated problems had already been existing between Georgians and Abkhazians and Georgians and Ossetians. Political representatives from Georgia, Russia or de facto Abkhazia and Samachablo failed to resolve these ethnic conflicts on the official level. Therefore the thesis will revolve around the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in ethnic conflict resolution in Georgia. Researching policies, actions, programs carried out by the CSOs, aiming at conflict resolution on unofficial level, made it possible to analyse obstacles to peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia. Not much has been written about the role of CSOs in conflict resolution in the Georgian case. To fill this gap in the literature, this thesis analyses the challenges that CSOs face in Abkhazia and Samachablo and examines the opportunities that these CSOs have in the process of conflict resolution. In future, this thesis can also be used as background for devising and implementing new policies in Georgia.

The reason why the involvement of civil society organizations in ethnic conflict resolution in Georgia has been chosen as a topic of this thesis is the following: Abkhazian and Ossetian ethnic conflicts in Georgia have almost 30 years history, with the consequences of 300 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Abkhazia and Samachablo (Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, 2015). Conflict resolution process was not successful on official level – as Georgian government and representatives of de facto Abkhazia and Samachablo failed to find a peaceful resolution. Negotiations on ministerial level could not resolve the conflict. When the official negotiations (Track One Diplomacy) do not work, then other unofficial actors (like CSOs) get involved in the

process, trying to find peaceful ways to end the conflict (Track Two Diplomacy). Moreover this topic (in Georgian case) is not highly researched, and the thesis will be among those few researches around the role of CSOs in Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts. Civil society organisations' role in Georgian conflicts resolution is analysed based on the theory of Track Two Diplomacy.

As the thesis focuses on conflicts inside one country – Georgia – single case study is used. For the literature review about Track Two Diplomacy, the Abkhazian and Samachablo conflicts and the role of CSOs in ethnic rivalry, books and scholarly articles are used. In order to analyze how CSOs work in Georgia, the web pages of the selected organizations and governmental structures are examined. Besides these, the sources also include various reports, analytical publications, news articles and Facebook pages. To thoroughly understand the challenges that the selected CSOs face while conducting peace-building projects, in-depth interviews with their representatives are carried out (however only eight out of 12 organisations agreed on interview). The interviews also prove useful for determining the opportunities that these CSOs have in the field, but this is also complemented by drawing conclusions based on literature.

This thesis is structured in three main chapters. First chapter analyses the theory of Track Two diplomacy, which is divided into four main parts. The first part discusses the phases of peace-building and shows the differences between peace-keeping and conflict resolution. The second part is about the theory of Track Two Diplomacy. The third sub-chapter explains what the role of civil society organisations is in conflict resolution. The examples of CSOs' successful involvement in the conflict resolution are given based on the Guatemalan, Northern Irish, Israel-Palestinian and Bosnia-Herzegovinian cases, where it is discussed how the CSOs contributed in bringing the conflicting parties closer. The fourth part of the first chapter analyses the types of civil society organisations - this classification is used in the empirical sections of the thesis to group the Georgian CSOs under investigation.

The second chapter discuses the two conflicts in Georgia. The chapter is divided in four main parts. The first two parts present the historical background and Soviet era and the escalation of the conflicts in 1990s. This part is followed by the discussing the failed negotiations from the beginning of the conflict until the Russo-Georgian war in 2008. This part analyses the reasons, why the negotiations failed on official level. The final part represents post 2008 period, where the negotiations between the conflicting sides are discussed after the recognition of Abkhazia and Samachablo by Russia and three other countries.

The final empirical chapter is about the researched CSOs' involvement in Abkhazian and Samachablo conflicts. The first part of the chapter is a noverview of the researched CSOs and their classification in four groups. The following four parts are about the activities, challenges and opportunities of the CSOs in conflict resolution - what are their programs in conflict resolution, what is their main focus, what are the results and the outcomes of their conducted projects. Based on their activities and interviews the challenges and opportunities are discussed for each category.

Chapter 1. Track Two Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution

This chapter analyses the theory of Track Two Diplomacy (TTD) in conflict resolution and discusses the phases of the peace-building process. In this part of the thesis the role of civil society organisations in conflict resolution is explained as the part of Track Two Diplomacy and the classification of the CSOs involved in Georgian ethnic conflicts in Abkhazia and Samachablo[1] is given.

1.1. Peace-keeping, Conflict Resolution and Peace-building

Before moving on the theory of Track Two Diplomacy, it is important to distinguish the terms of conflict resolution, peace-keeping and peace-building from each other. There does not exist a common and unique definition of these terms, as they are differently understood by diverse international organisations and social scientists. On the ground the main role of peace-keeping can be defined as conflict management and communication activities, but it also has other functions like military (securing the conflict zone and preventing violence), humanitarian (distributing services), political (helping the legitimate government to restore control) and economic (assisting efforts for development) (Woodhouse, 2015: 27). However in this thesis the definition of peace-keeping is related to the presence of military forces (like United Nations peace-keeping forces) in the conflict region, in order to prevent armed attacks and violence and maintain peaceful environment between the conflict sides. Another definition of peace-keeping is the deployment of national and more commonly multinational forces in the conflict zone, in order to help control and resolve an actual or potential armed conflict between or within the conflict states - "*Peacekeeping forces are*

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[1] "South Ossetia" is not the original name of region. Its historical name is Samachablo - a land named after the medieval prince Machabeli. (Fowkes, 2002) The term "South Ossetia" was used in middle nineteenth century to describe the area of historical Georgian province of Kartli, that was settled by Ossetians (Gachechiladze, 1995: 86). The term was widely introduced by separatist Ossetians after illegally seceding from Georgia to indicate that they were linked with the North Ossetia located in North Caucasus. In the thesis the original name of the region – Samachablo – will be used.

normally deployed with the consent of the parties to a conflict and in support of a ceasefire or other agreed upon peace measures" (Caplan, 2018). Unlike peace-keeping, conflict resolution does not entail the use of military force. In general, conflict resolution is a way to find a peaceful solution of the conflict between one or more parties. However all conflict sides should agree on the solution, conflict resolution should be as fast as possible and the solution should improve relations between adversaries (Nagy and Wolff, 2017). At the end of the process of conflict resolution, every conflict side should be satisfied with the decision, which is aimed to resolve the conflict. The final step in conflict resolution is ending the conflict in a peaceful way and creating such an environment that prevents re-escalation of the conflict. Together the peace-keeping and the conflict resolution processes are combined in peace-building process. The latter, according to Boutros Boutros-Ghali (the United Nations Secretary-General in 1992-1996), is an action to "*strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.*" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). To make it clearer, peace-keeping is the first phase and conflict resolution is the final part of peace-building process. However peace-keeping and conflict resolution processes can take place at the same time or it is also possible that during the conflict resolution process, there will occur the necessity of presence of peace-keeping forces in the conflict region. In the thesis, in Georgian case, CSOs are discussed according to their involvement in the conflict resolution process.

1.2. Track Two Diplomacy

For centuries conflict resolution process was only held on official level. Diplomats or other official state representatives met each other and discussed the possible solution of the conflicts. Conflict resolution is not a new phenomenon and its roots can be found thousands of years ago. For today, the oldest known treaty that ended the war between two independent and equally powerful states was concluded in 1276 BC. The Egyptian pharaoh

Ramses II and the Emperor Hattusilis III signed a treaty that ended the Egyptian-Hittite war for 80 years. Even today negotiations for solving the conflicts are held on ministerial level, where the only actors are states. However in the twentieth century, a new – unofficial form of negotiations was developed. Novelty was that unlike the official negotiations, where only the official representatives were involved, the new form of conflict resolution was unofficial that meant no participation of states officials like diplomats, ministries, presidents, etc. In 1981(82) William D. Davidson and Joseph V. Montville called this new form of negotiation the "Track Two Diplomacy" (TTD). According to them, the Track One Diplomacy (TOD) is the policy statement of president and secretary of the state or official visits and meetings between the states, whereas Track Two Diplomacy is "*unofficial non-structured interaction*" (Montville and Davidson, 1981-1982). The necessity of developing Track Two Diplomacy in conflict resolution occurs, when state officials fail the negotiations. The reason of failure could be different, but whereas officials have the reasons to fail, the Track Two Diplomacy does not have one. If on official level, enemies or conflict sides meet, on unofficial level (TTD) no one is considered as enemy. On TTD every one is equal where nobody will discuss whose fault is the escalation of the conflict or who started it first. It is not easy to define what the Track Two Diplomacy really is, because no two TTD are the same and sometimes they are very different with different actors. That is why the succeeded process of TTD from one case, could no be used in another case to resolve the conflict. Track Two Diplomacy does not have universal format that can resolve all the conflict issues similarly. TTD does not replace official negotiations or official international relations. Track Two Diplomacy can be going parallel of official meetings (when those meetings do not have any positive result) or after them (when Track One Diplomacy failed the process). The aim of TTD is to create the environment where the citizens, interested groups, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), communities and other unofficial members from the conflict parties will be able to discuss and generate ideas of conflict resolution and later to take those ideas into official level as treaties and agreements. Before defining the Track Two Diplomacy theory in more detail, it should be mentioned that for Davidson and Montville the examples of TTD were only scientific and cultural exchanges (Davidson and Montville, 1981-1982: 155). In later years the form of Track Two Diplomacy has

developed and more and more unofficial actors got involved. But who are those actors? The answer is very simple – any group that does not include official state or religion representatives (The role of religion in peace building and conflict resolution process is arguable as well. Religion in some cases can be considered as the participant of Track Two Diplomacy, while in other cases it can be official or totally neutral. It depends if the religion is independent from the state/government and what is the interests of the religion. For example religion in Iran is on governmental level. Because of these circumstances, the role of religion as CSO, is not discussed in the case studies in this thesis). The participants of TTD can be social communities, unions, interest groups, civil society organisations (CSOs), citizens, etc. However sometimes CSOs bring public officials to the round table to engage in dialogue with the representatives of civil society in unofficial meetings.

Despite the fact, that the term of Track Two Diplomacy was developed in 1980s, unofficial negotiations have longer history. The roots of TTD can be found in the meetings of interested public elites in Hague, where they discuss peace issues. Despite the fact that those Hague meetings were different from that, what is today known as Track Two Diplomacy, they could be counted as the first form of unofficial negotiations (Jones, 2015: 12). Another pre-TTD example is the involvement of private group – "Moral Re-armament" (MRA) in the peacekeeping negotiations between German, France and British citizens to promote reconciliation between those societies in 1946 (Mathews, 2001: 106). It should be mentioned that the format of both these examples (Hague meetings and MRA) were not the same as TTD is today, however they both are considered as the roots of Track Two Diplomacy. Widely recognised the first example of modern Track Two Diplomacy is connected with John Burton – a former Australian Diplomat. In 1960s Burton and his colleagues worked out the theories on possibilities of understanding and ending conflicts. John Burton developed a theoretical approach according to which human factors such a dialogue and communication could play the equal role in conflict resolution as official negotiations. Burton and his colleagues argued that dialogue, relations and values on unofficial meetings, were important parts of the conflict resolution (Burton, 1972). One of the main contributors of Track Two Diplomacy theory is Herbert Kelman, - Professor of

Social ethics at Harvard University, who, as Peter Jones mentions, has been a leading figure in formatting informal discussions between Jews and Palestinians (Jones, 2015:15).

What makes the Track Two Diplomacy stronger than Track One Diplomacy is that on official meetings, sides should be given statuses and they should recognise each other. However in many cases the recognition from the state, itself means the victory of adversary (for example when the state officials and representatives of the rebel or separatists meet each other, state officials are limited to give them the equal negotiator status). Recognition on unofficial level (during TTD) does not mean anything, parties do not have statuses and their meetings rely on the goodwill of the participants. TTD is the way to start communication between the conflict sides, which do not meet (or the meetings fail) on official level. In some cases state(s) refuses to communicate with the adversary and this condition is too risky. As Martin Leiner mentions refusing communication is high risk strategy, like in 2004 when Vladimir Putin refused to talk with the terrorist group during the Beslan school attack, where 330 hostages were killed (Leiner, 2018: 21). TTD makes the environment where conflict sides can meet and at least talk and get to know better each other. Track Two Diplomacy has ability to give the parties the role of mediators. Unofficial participants of TTD are able to control the peace building process that gives them the sense of ownership over the whole process (Ibid: 41). Sense of ownership of the process, increases accountability of the parties and they show more desire to succeed the negotiations. Another advantage of TTD is its flexibility. Track two diplomacy is more flexible not only in form but in time as well. Sometimes several months are needed to organise a meeting between adversaries. Time flexibility is the thing that official structures do not have. They attempt to wait unlit for the best time to meet (while "the best" time might not come at all). The place where the meeting will be arranged has a significant meaning as well. In most cases, the place for negotiations is chosen a neighbouring country that is not always a good idea. Bordering countries are somehow involved in the crisis (directly or indirectly) and holding negotiations there, can negatively impact the conflict resolution process. Location for meetings should be completely unbiased to the parties (Leiner and Schliesser, 2018: 45). One of the reasons why the negotiation processes

between the parties in Georgian cases failed, it that the official meetings where held mostly on Russian territory; Russia itself was/is biased and was/is actively involved in both ethnic conflicts in Georgia.

1.3. Civil Society Organisations and Their Role in Conflict Resolution

As already mentioned, civil society organisations (CSOs) are the actors of Track Two Diplomacy. Civil society organisations can focus on different issues within society and have different agenda. This thesis is focused only in those CSOs that are involved in conflict resolution (uses Track Two Diplomacy). For some political scientists like Angel M. Rabasa civil society organisations are "*the civic, social, cultural and religious institutions and organisations that form the basis of society and operate outside of the state but within the framework of the law*" (Rabasa, 2012: 10). However in this thesis, CSOs do not refer to religious associations. Civil Society organisations are the organisations within civil society which are not connected to the state institutions. The connection to the state does not make the organisation free from governmental decisions. If the organization lacks of free action or is dependent on state officials, it can not be considered as Civil Society Organization. One of the most major features of CSOs is that they do not have any ongoing, binding legal or economic relationships with the state (Gidron, Bar and Katz, 2004: 142). CSOs in general are voluntary organisations that focus on the needs of civil society. However it is sometimes too difficult to differentiate free civil society organisations from those organisations that have political orientation and protect governmental interests. CSOs are sometimes marginalized by the states. In many countries (like in Colombia), governments accuse civil society organisations in connection with opposition or rebels and blame them in participation in anti-governmental demonstrations. Thus such autocratic governments try to prevent CSOs from functioning freely and CSOs can even be punished if they publicly criticize undemocratic actions of one conflict side or the government (Poskitt and Dufranc, 2011: 9).

To differentiate civil society and civil society organisations from each other, first it should be mentioned that civil society is broader term that describes a situation or specific social sphere and combines different actors, including CSOs, whereas civil society organisations are concrete organisational forms of civil society - "*civil society organizations constitute only one aspect of the many diverse factors that comprise civil society*" (Gidron et al., 2004: 142). As an actor of Track Two Diplomacy, CSOs are actively involved in the conflict resolution process. Those civil society organisations that use TTD can be different civil associations, community groups, non governmental organisations (NGOs), unions, indigenous and youth groups, charitable organisations, foundations, professional associations, faith-based organisations, think tanks, independent educational organisations and social movements (Mattner and Forster, 2006: 2). According to the World Bank, civil society organisations refer to *"a wide of array of organizations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations"* (The World Bank, 2013).

CSOs in some cases were very effective in bringing conflict issues to the negotiation agenda. One of the best examples of the success of CSO is Guatemalan case[2]. Civil society groups, organized in the Asamblea de la Sociedad Civil[3], operated parallel to the official peace negotiations in Guatemala that lasted for two years. Civil society organisations successfully managed to bring important topics and issues to the negotiation agenda and two thirds of the proposals from the CSOs turned into the official peace agreements (Paffenholz, 2009: 19). Another successful case of CSOs involvement in conflict resolution is Northern Ireland. The conflict in Northern Ireland began in the late 1960s. The society

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[2] Guatemalan civil war – conflict between the Guatemalan government and leftist guerrilla groups, that fought under *Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity* (Unidad Revolucionario Nacional Guatemalteco; URNG) started in 1960 and lasted for 36 years. Conflict caused death of more than 200 000 citizens (Horst, Griffith, Stansifer and Anderson, 2018).

[3] Asamblea de la Sociedad Civil (in English – The Civil Society Assembly) was formed by the Guatemala government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) in order to develop peace negotiations. Along with the political parties, government and URNG, in the Assembly participated human rights organisations, trade union, academic and religion organisations and civil society organisations. For more about The Civil Society Assembly see: https://latinno.net/en/case/10090/

was divided in two parts: the Unionists – who wanted Northern Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom and the Nationalists – who aimed for the Northern Ireland to leave the UK and join the United Ireland.[4] As the part of the United Kingdom, British government decided to resolve the conflict and sent troops in the region in 1969, however the appearing of the British army aggravated the conflict further. At the beginning of the conflict, political officials in London wanted their government to have a neutral position in the conflict, however British government's neutrality was not accepted as Great Britain has direct interests in the security of the Northern Ireland (Jonathan Powell, 2008 via Democratic Progress Institute, 2012: 63). The conflict (known as *Troubles*) from 1969 until 1998 caused the death of more than 3,526 people (Sutton, 2001). During the conflict civil society organisations emerged, who were trying to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. One of the most active CSOs was the *Peace People*, which in 1976 organised demonstrations and rallies supporting the end of violence. Despite the fact that at first the movement was very popular (even the founders of the movement Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams were awarded by the Nobel Peace Prize), it could not find further development to unite all supporters and soon the movement lost popularity and changed in more quiet peace group, trying to bring Catholics and Protestants together to develop mutual way for resolving the conflict (Mccartney, 1999:45). Civil society organisations were able to contribute in education of the society. They created integrated schools without any official support in 1980s (Ibid: 46). CSOs were also actively involved in settling negotiations between conflict sides.

The first most active phase of CSOs involvement in negotiations started in 1992. A group of civil activists were able to create a commission (*Initiative '92*), which took opinions from the community, political parties, influential persons, etc. and it was composed by the individuals from Ireland and Britain. The commission took place from 1992 to 1993 and was chaired by the Norwegian professor Torkel Opsahl. Although the *Initiative '92* did not have significant outcomes, it encouraged the community groups and individuals to participate in negotiation process to resolve the conflict. For example representatives of

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[4] Despite the fact that the Unionists were mostly Protestants and the Nationalists were mostly Catholics, the conflict was not religion, but ideological – as the people in Northern Ireland have the same ethnicity as well.

economics and market also started participation in conflict resolution – seven main coordinating bodies of business, trade unions and industry formed a group, known as G7, under which they were able to start dialogues with politicians (Mccartney, 1999:45). The "Civic Forum for Northern Ireland" engaged civil society in different areas like culture, sports and arts, education and churches. As mentioned in Democratic Progress Institute's working paper about the Civil Society Mediation in Conflict Resolution, Forum played an important role during the transition from violence to peace (Democratic Progress Institute, 2012). The culmination of CSOs efforts was the Good Friday Agreement (Belfast Agreements) on 10th of April in 1998. However the agreement had to be ratified by a referendum and this made civil society organisations more active. There were created "No" (anti-Agreement movement) and "Yes" (pro-Agreements movement) campaigns. "Yes" movement was the result of "No" campaign and was formed by the *Initiative '92* members, in which different influential persons and celebrities participated (Mccartney, 1999:45). The conflict case in Northern Ireland shows that CSOs can affect the conflict both in positive and in negative ways (as the "NO" campaign was negative one).

CSOs are actively involved in conflict resolution process in Israel-Palestinian conflict. Like in Northern Ireland, in this conflict there are CSOs that contribute in conflict resolution, whereas there exist those who have a negative impact. Despite the fact that the conflict is not resolved yet, this is a very good example of CSOs' active role in conflict resolution process. In 1974 a Jewish nationalist organisation Gush Emunim (Bloc of the faithful) was established. The organisation claims that the West Bank, Gaza strip and Golan Heights are part of Israeli territory. Gush Emunim is characterised by extremist actions against Palestinians and a lot of violent acts are committed by them (Munson, 2008: 1). Formation of such right-wing organisations shows that not all CSOs are motivated to peacefully resolve the conflict. Opposing the Gush Emunim, in 1978 was created another civil society organisation called Peace Now. It claims, that both Jews and Palestinians have right to live within the secure borders and supports the idea of two states – creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Organisation works on educating and mobilizing public and tries to bring the conflict issues to the political agenda and makes the problems of the conflict resolution

as the main topic of the public discourse. Peace Now organises public lectures, debates, tours and different campaigns, etc.

After the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, Peace Now played the main role in creation of Israeli Peace Coalition, that later evolved into the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition where political and public figures and grassroots activists from Israel and Palestine participated. (Peace Now, 2018). CSOs are active in Palestine as well. In 1967, when Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Palestinian civil society organisations played an important role in providing social, educational and medical services to the Palestinian population (Jarrar, 2005). One of the biggest success of the involvement of CSOs in conflict resolution process were Oslo Peace Accords in 1993 and in 1995 where two opposed sides were brought to Oslo for negotiations and even today different civil society organisations still encourage Palestinians and Jews to participate together in different policy areas (Pirozzi and Mikhelidze, 2008). The Israel-Palestine case is one of the most vivid examples of civil society organisatios' involvement in conflict resolution. Different initiatives presented by these groups have demonstrated the possibility of a two-state solution to the negotiating partners, have challenged the narratives existing on both sides that there was no one willing to agree on a mutually acceptable formula, and have mobilized sufficient public support to pressure the governments of both Israel and Palestine as well as to gather tens of thousand of signatures (Kelman, 2005).

Another good example where CSOs show high activeness is Bosnia-Herzegovina. Like in Georgia, conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina started after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Former Yugoslavia was torn in different states. Ethnic conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina started in 1992, when Serbian government supported Serbian minority with military force (in case to protect them and also unify all Serb-held land of the former Yugoslavia). The conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a territorial conflict based on historical and ethnic motives. The conflict caused formation of guerrilla forces, which carried out deadly campaigns of massacring and terrorising civilians. These actions force millions of citizens to leave their homes and become refugees. This was the first biggest refugee crisis after the World War II (more than 3 million refugees). Conflict ended in 1995, when Bosnian,

Croatian and Serbian leaders signed the Dayton peace accords after the death of 250 000 people (Poskitt and Dufranc, 2011: 17). Despite the fact that the conflict is officially ended, ethnic societies find it difficult to integrate and build close relations with each other. In cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), CSOs managed to contribute in returning process of refugees. CSOs become active in education field (prompting democracy in schools and cross-border peace education), organised youth camps and worked on breaking the stereotypes. Civil society organisations created citizens' forums (like the *Association of Independent Intellectuals Circle 99 –Sarajevo* or the *Citizens' Alternative Parliament in Tuzla*) in order to improve multiethnic cooperation and social cohesion (Fischer, 2011). CSOs also enquired elections monitoring and anti corruption functions. In 2005 Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian civil society organisations devised a strategy for dealing the past conflict issues and since 2007 some of them have been actively involved in a campaign to set up a Regional Commission for Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling about War Crimes (RECOM). In the campaign more than 130 NGOs and 700 individuals from all over the former Yugoslavia take a part (Ibid: 300).

Those CSOs, which work on conflict resolution issues, have strong connections with each other and they often cooperate in different projects and programs. From 28th of February to the 1st of March in 2011 twenty three civil society organisations' representatives from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia met each other to discuss the challenges of conflict resolution and opportunities for further development of the CSOs, working on conflict issues (Poskitt and Dufranc, 2011: 19). Although CSOs in Bosnia-Herzegovina have some developing problems (project oriented issues), they are actively involved in conflict resolution and are contributing in social cohesion and integration. Those examples of the CSOs' involvement in conflict resolution process in Guatemala, Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine and in Bosnia-Herzegovina shows how important role can civil society organisations play in bringing conflict sides closer.

1.4. Types of Civil Society Organisations

In different countries civil society organisations are different by their form, activities, aims, etc. CSOs as differ from each other as the societies itself. CSOs have different power, ethnic and gender lines, hierarchy (some of them are more structured than others). Some civil society organizations can highly contribute in conflict resolution process, while there are CSOs that can be radical as well and interrupt the peace process. An example of such a CSO, which developed itself in radical and undemocratic way, is Taliban in Afghanistan. Taliban transformed from civil society force into a political, undemocratic and violent regime.

Civil Society organisations can be involved in peace-building process in different ways. Their role in conflict resolution depends on the form of the organisation and the phase of the conflict. CSOs can have different functions with different activities in conflict resolution: organising educational programs and youth activity camps, establishing peace cultures, establishing independent media, conducting meetings where new ideas about conflict resolution are generated, monitoring state institution activities and developing democratic culture, etc. (Olufemi and Adewale, 2012: 725). Reiner Forster and Mark Mattner combined functions of CSOs, discussed by different scholars and distinguished seven main functions of civil society organisations on peace building process: protection; monitoring/early warning; advocacy/public communication; socialisation; social cohesion; intermediation/facilitation and service provision (Forster and Mattner, 2006: 12). Civil society organisations can be more effective in performing some of these functions while in others they might not demonstrate much effectiveness. Mostly CSOs are not alone while fulfilling the abovementioned seven functions. Other organisations, political parties or state officials can be involved at the same time along with the civil society organisations. One CSO can have different functions (because sometimes those functions overlap with each other). A CSO can also change the function according to the conflict phase (e.g. it is pre-conflict period; the conflict already started or it is the post-conflict phase). If a CSO has a function - that is not appropriate for the situation/conflict phase, then there can be no

outcome of the conflict resolution process. As Forster and Mattner mention, a key challenge for civil society organisations is to fulfil the right function at the right time and adapt to transition phases from conflict to the peace (Ibid: 13). Based on what phase of the conflict is, the organisation adopts the relevant function. If the there is a post war period, civil society organisation can not fulfil all seven functions. For example the first function of protection[5] is mostly relevant when the armed conflict actually goes on and military forces are attacking each other. Those CSOs, which are involved in conflict resolution in post war period, have the following function(s)[6] of **socialisation**, **social cohesion** and **intermediation/facilitation[7]**.

The function of **socialisation** focuses on developing peace culture in conflict sides. Activities of the CSOs with this function include peace education, dialogue projects, exchange programs and peace camps. **Social cohesion** can be considered as the second step from the socialisation. This function means restoring bridges between conflict sides. The activities of this function are organising the events and meetings, where both societies from conflict sides are actively and equally involved and have tight communication with each other. Such events can be joint cultural events, mixed team football games, joint services and joint development committees where adversaries work side by side (Forster and Mattner, 2006: 16). If the CSO has a function of **Intermediation and Facilitation,** it means that this civil society organisation already organises table negotiations between conflict sides. This function is very important as if the negotiation process of conflict resolution has a positive outcome, then it can be brought onto official level. However a CSO, fulfilling this function, should be very careful, as the negative developing of the negotiation process can pull the societies back to the starting point, where they saw each other as enemies.

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[5] CSOs this function means to protect citizens, their property and rights from the military forces. This does not mean that the protection is not needed during the whole conflict. However this function is most needed when military actions have not ceased yet and the citizens are under the actual threat of death, violation their rights or damage to their property.

[6] Each civil society organisation can have one or several functions at the same time.

[7] CSOs working on the conflicts in Georgia are chosen base on these three functions.

The OECD has generated *theories and methods of change* in the conflict (OECD, 2008) and partly based on these methods, the new categories were created for this thesis. The chosen civil society organisations, which work on conflict resolution in Georgia, were divided into four groups:

1. **Grassroots Workers** –this group unities those CSOs that work on individual level, mostly within only one conflict side. Activities of such CSOs can be considered as the first steps in conflict resolution process. This group concentrates on the themes like:

    a. Individual Change – working on individual level. Focusing on transformation people's attitudes and behaviours and developing their skills. Individual change is aimed to be achieved by trainings, workshops, public lectures. Such work includes trauma healing activities.

2. **Connectors** – This group unites those civil society organisations that work on bringing conflict sides closer to each other and warming relations between adversaries. Those CSOs which are categorised in this groups focus on getting known societies from conflict parties better with each other and creating the environment where both parties can live side by side. CSOs in this group, work on higher steps of conflict resolution process than "Grassroots Workers". "Connector" CSOs focusing on themes like:

    a. Relationships and connections between societies from conflict sides – (re)building a bridge, breaking down stereotypes and polarisation, bringing the adversaries closely to each other. To achieve these aims, CSOs organise joint programmes like simulations, youth camps, trainings and other activities where both sides will be able to work side by side and have close communications with each other.

    b. Community reintegration – working on safely returning refugees to their homes. In post-conflict phase, returning refugees will cause resettling

adversaries side by side that itself increases the integration level of societies. Under this sub category, CSOs focus on social integration activities.

3. **Activists** – Unlike the "Grassroots Workers" who focus only on a specific society's opinion, the CSOs, classified in this group, are working on changing and formatting the public opinion as a whole. They use media, public speeches, agitations, etc. to mobilise the public around one idea. Within this group there are three sub categories, according to CSOs' main working topics:

   a. Reduction of violence – working on reducing violence, that are committed by the combatants and bringing security and peace. To achieve this goal, CSOs are working on creating peace zones, achieving cease-fire, conducting observation missions.

   b. Public mobilisation – mobilising people to go against war and force leaders from conflicting sides to establish peace. Grassroots mobilisation can be achieved by organising civil demonstrations against war, planning performances and/or using media for anti-war campaign.

   c. Changing public opinion using media and online publications – CSOs in this sub category do not use physical activities like the organisations in abovementioned two previous sub categories. They mostly concentrate on using media and analytical publications to transform people's hostile attitude into a more peaceful one and promote solidarity and tolerance.

4. **Negotiators** – CSOs, categorised in this group, are working on the highest level of Track Two Diplomacy. They are bringing adversaries to the negotiation table, where parties generate ideas how to solve the conflict. Conflict sides are making agreements and generate new ideas that might be transformed into official documents. The CSOs in this group work on:

   a. Peace agreements – achieving peace agreements between adversaries. Transforming Track Two Diplomacy agreements to official level. For peace agreements CSOs mediate negotiation process, organising face to face

dialogues on unofficial level between the representatives of interested groups, societies and influential persons.

b. Rethinking of history – this entails organising truth and reconciliation commissions and creating a "peace environment", where historians from conflict sides will have opportunity to sit together and discuss, rethink, edit the misperceptions and write a true history of the conflict.

These four categories classify civil society organisations based on their actions and functions. Discussing CSOs from this scope, makes it possible to look closer at their work and analyse what those obstacles are that interrupt them to successfully contribute in conflict resolution. Moreover categorising CSOs makes it easier to see what kinds of challenges are characteristic for each group.

Chapter 2. Ethnic Conflicts in Georgia

This chapter is divided in four parts. The first part analyses the type of conflicts we encounter in Georgia and provides a brief historical overview of ethnic relations between Georgians and Abkhazians and Georgians and Ossetians - how they have developed before the Soviet era and how the ethnic groups in Abkhazia and Samachablo were formed. The third sub chapter is about the creation of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia and autonomy of Samachablo, their development within the Soviet Georgia and the escalation of separatism. The fourth part discusses the negotiation process and its failure on official level from 1990 until the 2008 war. The final sub chapter concentrates on the post 2008 relations between the conflicting sides.

2.1. Historical Background

The current ethnic conflicts in Georgia have unfolded over a span of three decades. Before discussing Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts in Georgia, it is important to define what kind of conflicts these are. Conflict is a term that refers to a collective armed or unarmed confrontation between at least two sides who can be state or non-state actors (Poskitt and Dufranc, 2011: 8). Conflicts in Abkhazia and Samachablo are intra-state conflicts. This type of conflict is the most common type, that occurs between the forces of government and opposing group within the state borders. The motive of this type of conflict might be ethnic, religious or ideological. Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts are ethnic conflicts. Intra-state conflicts have two sub-types: 1) "classical" intra-state conflict that does not entail foreign intervention and 2) with the involvement from another state, when one conflict side is supported by military troops of a foreign government (Ibid). Conflicts in Georgia are the second type of intra-state conflicts, where Russia (as the foreign state) is actively involved and supports Abkhazians and Ossetians with its military forces.

Conflicts between Abkhazians and Georgians, on the one hand, and between Ossetians and Georgians, on the other hand, began in the late 1980s. However, before moving to conflict escalation, for understanding the conflicts better, it is necessary to see who Abkhazians and Ossetians are and how they came to and settled in Georgia.

The assimilation process of Abkhazians with Georgians started in the I-II century, lasted for centuries and it has different stages (Okruashvili, 2011: 9). It should be mentioned that this territory was mostly settled by the Kartvelian people – Megrelians in the Middle Ages – and by that time the land was the marchland area of Abkhazian and Megrelian princes (Gachechiladze, 1995: 82). Major changes in ethnicity took place in the XVI-XVII centuries, when new migratory wave came from the north-west Caucasus. Those migrants together with indigenous Georgians and assimilated Abkhazians created a new Abkhazian ethnic group (Okruashvili, 2011: 10).

In 1800s, when Russian empire started to conquer Georgia, duchies rioted. Among them was the former Abkhazian duchy, where the peasants joined the riots. Russian Empire sent forces to different parts of Georgia where they crushed the rebellions. In Abkhazia, Empire forces also destroyed peasants' houses, plants, and forced them to leave their homes (Janashia et al., 1940: 372). Thus more than 51 thousand Abkhazians migrated to the Ottoman Empire. It is worth mentioning that 51 000 migrants included indigenous Georgians, assimilated Abkhazians and those north-west people who could not finish ethnic adaptation in Abkhazia yet (Okruashvili, 2011: 10,32,33). To prevent the future strengthening of the remaining Abkhazian population, Russian empire created Russian, Kazak, Estonian, Latvian, Moldavian, Ukrainian, Greek, Armenian and other settlements on the former lands of migrants (Janashia, et al, 1940: 372). It should be mentioned that some from these people, especially Armenians fought on Abkhazian side in the conflict in 1990s. In fact, the ethnicity of Abkhazians has dramatically changed after abolishing the duchy of Abkhazia in 1962 and they were no more the same ethnic group as they used to be even a century ago.

The case of Samachablo region is different from Abkhazian one. Relations between Georgians and Ossetians on Georgian land begun in the late middle centuries. Most history about the ancient Ossetians are known from Georgian historical sources and texts in Ossetian only appeared in the late eighteenth century in Georgian alphabet. Ossetians migrated from the north Caucasus in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Newcomers were welcomed by the Georgian feudal lords, as migrants were cheap labour force. Ossetians were baptized as Orthodox Christians and until 1922 they had no ethnic-territorial unit (Gachechiladze, 1995: 86). The name of ethnic group – "Osi" comes from Georgian language and at first time non one knew those people with this name (Topchishvili, 2007: 49). The ethnographical name – Oseti (in Georgian means the place where Ossetians - "Osi" people live) was called to the country in the north Caucasus. It should be mentioned that in the middle centuries the Georgian territory where Ossetians lived was named Samachablo, after Georgian medieval prince Machabeli (Fowkes, 2002: 143) that in Georgian means the land that is ruled by Machabeli (Sa-Machab-lo). The facts from history show that Ossetians and Abkhazians peacefully lived with Georgians and were integrated into the Georgian society.

2.2. The Soviet Era and Separatism in Georgia

Georgia was occupied by the Russian Empire until 1918. At that time the revolution took place in Russia and three countries in Caucasus – Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia claimed independence. The period of freedom lasted for only 3 years. On 25th of February in 1921 Georgian SSR (Soviet Socialist Republic) and on 31st of March in the same year Abkhazian SSR were proclaimed. However in December 1921 Abkhazia entered to Georgian SSR with the status of equal, not as subordinate state. In 1931 Abkhazian status changed into ASSR (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic) (Fowkes, 2002: 80). Before Stalin's death Georgian and Russian cultures dominated the region and Abkhazian one was sidelined. The situation changed in the late 50s when atmosphere became freer. Abkhazians had good conditions to develop and move their culture forward. The Abkhazian University,

73 Abkhazian schools, theatre, television and radio were working in local language. Newspapers, journals and books were published in Abkhazian language. The number of Abkhazians holding major communist party and on governmental posts was proportionally much higher than their actual number in the total population (Gachechiladze, 1995: 85). Misproportional distribution of administrative power was one of the major factors that increased the willingness to secede. The relations between Georgians and Abkhazians became tense already in the beginning of 1980s and reached its highest level in 1988 when Abkhazian People's Forum Aidgylara (unity) was established. Aidgylara started to announce the desire of independence of Abkhazia. In 1989 they held a rally, asking for removal Georgian control and giving them the status of republic (Fowkes, 2002: 140). Local Georgians from the city of Gali rose against Abkhazians and protested their desire of secession. The wave of anti-Abkhazian protests spread to the capital of Georgia, where people condemned Abkhazian movement toward separation and began to call for an independent Georgia. On 9th of April 1989, Georgian communist party, with the help of Soviet troops suppressed the demonstrations in Tbilisi by force. Thus at least 20 citizens were killed and more than 100 were wounded (Fowkes, 2002). In following years Abkhazians cut their links with Georgians and in 1991 they claimed independence. Situation became tense in the capital as well. First Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's political campaign was based on nationalist agenda. In December of 1991 started rebellion movements against the president and the consequence of riots was a civil war that took place mostly in Tbilisi. Civil war ended in 1992 with the victory of rebels, who forced Gamsakhurdia to flee from the country. A military government was formed in Tbilisi, however they could not lead the country so they asked Eduard Shevardnadze - the former communist party leader to return to Tbilisi and by the 1992 elections he was elected as a president of Georgia. War between Abkhazians and Georgians started in August in 1992 and lasted 13 month. More than 10 000 people were killed from both sides. On Abkhazian side local Armenians, Kazaks, Northern Caucasians and unofficially Russian military troops were fighting. Abkhazians won the war and they expelled not only Georgian militants but also Georgian citizens from Abkhazia (half of the pre-war population), that led to ethnic cleansing (Popescu, 2010). Cease-fires between Abkhazians and Georgians were

reached three times with the brokerage of Russian government (Gachechiladze, 1995), however the interesting fact is that Abkhazians were encouraged by Russians to secede and Russian troops were fighting on Abkhazians sides. Simply Russia's Caucasian policy was – dividing and ruling.

The Soviet Government played similar political game with Ossetians. Before that, when Russian empire occupied Georgia, Samachablo district was also occupied as Georgian part. In 1918 revolution took place in Russia and Georgia gained independence, however Ossetians living in Samachablo claimed independence as Soviet Republic in 1920 (Cvetkovski and Sammut, 1996: 8). After occupation of Georgia by the Soviet army, Samachablo district was given the autonomous status within Georgia (one rank lower than Abkhazia status) in 1922 and the capital became Tskhinvali – settled mostly by ethnic Georgians (Fowkes, 2002: 143), (Cvetkovski, 1996: 9).

Similar to Abkhazian case, Georgian nationalists' movements stimulated rise of Ossetian nationalism in 1080s. Ossetian national movement Ademon Nykhas (Popular Shrine) gained control over the district and in 1989 claimed upgrading the status from an Autonomous District to an Autonomous Republic (Fowkes, 2002: 144). Georgian government sent volunteers to the region to defend ethnically Georgians. These actions transformed to the conflict. Negotiations with the Georgian President had no results as he believed in nationalist interests and it was hard to find any consensuses. Consequently combat continued for two years. Georgians could not pay too much attention to the situation in Samachablo as there were other problems: in Tbilisi civil war and in Abkhazia a new war was starting. Russia took Ossetians under its wing and on 19th of January 1992 more than 90 percent of Ossetians living in Samachablo voted to place their republic under Russian government (Fowkes, 2002: 144).

2.3. Failed Negotiations

Official negotiations between conflict sides were led by Russia. It is strange that Russia played the main part in escalation of both conflicts, and again the Russian government was called to find solutions to the conflicts. Agreement about cease-fire was signed by Georgians and Abkhazians on the 27th of July 1993, however Abkhazians violated the terms of the agreement and launched an assault on Sokhumi – the main city in the region. Russia was trying to maintain the broker's role in negotiations between conflicting sides in order to keep influence on Caucasus region. To balance the Russian growing role, UN got involved in conflict resolution. Thus at the end of 1993 Geneva negotiations were started under the UN monitoring (Khintba and Akaba 2011: 21). First Geneva negotiations on Georgian-Abkhazian conflict lasted from the 30th of November to the 1st of December 1993. Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Georgian and Abkhazian sides on the 1st of December. The negotiations took place under the aegis of UN, where the Russian Federation was represented as a mediator. The negotiations were also attended by the representatives of UN and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, later changed to OSCE) (UN Security Council, 1993).

The first paragraph of the memorandum was related to keeping the peace process by not using force or the threat of force against each other (Abkhazians and Georgians) for the time period of the continuing negotiations to find the best solution of the conflict – "to achieve a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia" (UN Security Council, 1993). Returning of refugees was mentioned in the fourth paragraph. According to that, Abkhazian and Georgian sides should have created the appropriate conditions for the refugees, so they could return to their homes all over the territory of Abkhazian region (UN Security Council, 1993). As it appeared, the sides did not find it easy to fulfil all the requirements of the agreed memorandum. Thus Geneva negotiations continued in 1994 and another agreement was signed on the 13th of January 1994 again aiming to return Georgian refugees to Abkhazia, however on the 15th of Murch Abkhazians left renewed peace negotiations in protest against Georgia's disbandment of Abkhazian parliament. On the 10th

of July 1995 Eduard Shevardnadze and Viktor Chernomyrdin (the then Russian Prime Minister) reached an agreement on returning Georgian refugees to their homes, however Vladislav Ardzinba (the then de facto Abkhazian leader) rejected the proposal (Fowkes, 2002: 142). In January 1998 Shevardnadze intended to bring UN peacekeeping operation in Abkhazia, however Russians and Ardzinba refused to this and announced that as the peacekeeping forces only CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) troops would be acceptable (Fowkes, 2002: 143).

Negotiations went in blind alley in May 1998, when Georgian paramilitary parts decided to gain control over the Gali district (settled by ethnic Georgians). On 28th of May the same year, Abkhazians sent troops to fully control the district and drive Georgians out of Gali. Georgian irregular forces fought back, however they were defeated and 35 000 Georgians were forced to flee (Fowkes, 2002: 143). Yeltsin and UN accused Abkhazia for the invasion and on the 1st of May refugees from Gali were allowed to return to their homes. However the conflict acquired a completely frozen character when the so-called referendum was held in Abkhazia on the 3rd of October in 1999 and Abkhazians proclaimed de facto independence.

Negotiations between Ossetians and Georgians started in 1992 after the war. On the 22nd of June in 1992 Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze and the representatives from Samachablo, Russia and North Ossetia met in Sochi. The negotiations produced a ceasefire and the Joint Control Commission (JCC) – a quadrilateral body with the representatives of Georgia, Russia, North Ossetia and Samachablo. JCC was later joined by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (International Crisis Group, 2007). The main aim of Joint Control Commission was to Lead the observance of the agreement, to create and implement conflict resolution actions, promote dialogue, work for returning refugees and IDP (Internally Displaced People), to solve the problems related to economic reconstruction and monitor human rights in the region. In addition JCC's mission was to coordinate the activities of the Joint Peace Keeping Forces (JPKF's was created to restore peace and keep law in the conflict zone. JPKF was formatted by Georgians, Russians and Ossetians) (Cvetkovski and Sammut, 1996). In Samachablo region Russia was represented

by peace-keeping forces and as the mediator of the negotiations between the conflict sides. There were no further military conflicts between Ossetians and Georgians until the new millennium. In 1996 Ergneti Market (black market) was opened in the village called Ergneti (located few hundred meters away from Tskinvali), where Ossetians and Georgians traded with each other (Vardzelashvili, 2013). Despite the fact that the Georgian economy did not get any income from the market, local population (Georgians and Ossetians) got serious benefits by selling or buying the goods. That market was the best place, where civilians from conflict sides met and had close relations with each other.

The period from 1999 to 2005 is the stagnation of the peace negotiations between Abkhazians and Georgians. Georgian government changed in 2003 and Mikheil Saakashvili became a new president. De facto governmental changes took place in Abkhazia region as well and in 2005 Sergei Bagapsh was elected as de facto Abkhazian president. Abkhazians accused Shevardnadze for starting the war in Abkhazia, while Saakashvili was not connected to that war. Thus changes in the leadership could have been the hope of staring new negotiations between the conflict sides. On the 5th of December in 2005 Abkhazians and Georgians on ministerial level signed a protocol on agreement of non-continuation of hostilities and on 6-7 December EU and the Council of Europe mediated consultations to rehabilitate the conflict zone (Haindrava and Gegeshidze, 2011: 15). Situation seemed hopeful that peace-building process would move to the new stage, however there was not any further progress in negotiations. In May 2004 Georgian government gained control over Adjara (autonomous region in Georgia that was controlled by de facto Adjarian leader Aslan Abashidze). Encouraged with the success in Adjara, after the ceremony of signing the law on the status of Adjara on the 5th of May 2004, Saakashvili told the journalists that Georgia would be ready to bring Abkhazia back in two-tree years – *"We have no illusions and we know that Georgia is not ready yet to bring back Abkhazia. But we can make it happen after two or three more years"* (Civil Georgia, 2004) In July 2006 Georgian government sent interior ministry troops to suppress the disobedience of the former presidential representative in Kodori gorge (the valley located in Abkhazia region that is populated by Georgians - Svans. Until 2008 the district was

controlled by the Georgian government). After completing the operation, some Georgian troops (with weapons) stayed in the upper part of Kodori. The operation in the public was seen as regaining jurisdiction over Abkhazia. Georgian President ordered official Abkhazian government (that was fled in Tbilisi) to relocate in the Kodori gorge. Thus the status quo, that was determined by the ceasefire agreement in 1994 at this time was broken by Georgian side (this fact was reflected in the UN Security Council Resolution of the 13th of October in 2006) (Haindrava and Gegeshidze 2011: 17,18). The main motives for newly elected Georgian president were to join NATO and UE. He started forming Georgian army based on NATO standards. Strengthening Georgian military forces and future possible NATO membership of Georgia and Ukraine was seen as a threat by the Russian government. On the 12th of July in 2008, the then Russian President Dimitri Medvedev, signed the "Russian Foreign Policy Concept", where he mentioned that NATO's eastern enlargement was against the Russian interests and that Russian government would protect Russian citizens in Eurasia (Haindrava and Gegeshidze 2011: 18). Here should be underlined that before 2008, Russia issued passports in Abkhazia and Samachablo regions for the citizens to obtain Russian citizenship. In 2006-2007 Russia made military exercises in the Samachablo region, that lasted until the Russo-Georgian war 2008.

Governmental change in Tbilisi had its own impacts on Samachablo region as well. Since 2004 negotiations between Georgians and Ossetians went in new phase. Conflict sides generated new ideas and ways for resolving the conflict. Georgians offered Samachablo the widest possible autonomy within Georgia (however "widest possible autonomy" was not detailed, what it would be in practice). Ossetians rejected any possibilities of the status within Georgia, but have expressed preparedness to cooperate on issues like development, rehabilitation and confidence, which also included demilitarization (International Crisis Group, 2007: 11). Thus sides could not agree on the terms and negotiations failed. Moreover, Ossetians and Georgians had different view of security threats in the region. While Russia was the main security threat for the Georgian government, Ossetians regarded Tbilisi as the threat. Since 2004 both sides strengthened their unauthorized military presence in the region. OSCE and the peacekeepers reported about appearing Ossetian

trenches and fortifications in Samachablo as the violation of past agreements. New entrenchments were also noticed on Georgian-controlled areas (International Crisis Group, 2007: 14). It was obvious that both sides were preparing for military actions. JPFK (Joint Peacekeeping Forces) reported that from the 1st of October 2006 until the 1st of April 2007 there were more that thousand ceasefire violations from both sides (International Crisis Group, 2007: 17). In general, the situation in Samachablo region became tenser after closing the Ergneti Market by the Georgian government in 2004. Officials from Georgian side announced that the market was closed, because this was the route that was used for bringing illicit goods to Georgia, that harmed the Georgian economy (Vardzelashvili, 2013). Closing the Ergneti market was the backward step in Georgian-Ossetian relations, as the link where citizens from conflicting sides could meet on local level, was cut. Strengthening military forces near the conflict zone from both sides was the sign that peace-keeping process was failing. Since 2006 informal meetings and negotiations between Georgians and Ossetians failed (International Crisis Group, 2007).

Relations between Georgia and Russia started to become tenser from 2006. Saakashvili's public speeches were anti-Russian and Russian governments itself banned import of Georgian goods and stopped airway and postal communications. Georgia's tense relations with Russia had the meaning that there was no perspective of continuing peace negotiations with Abkhazians and Ossetians. In 2006 negotiations between Georgians and Abkhazians failed.

The 2008 war has a lot of preconditions from Russian (mostly) and Georgian sides. After the recognition Kosovo as independent state by 19 EU countries, Ukraine and Georgia did not receive MAP on NATO's Bucharest summit. On 16th of April 2008 Putin issued an order, according to which Russian political authorities had permission to establish direct links with de facto authorities in Abkhazia and Samachablo. The order was followed by delivering military equipment and machinery in the conflict regions from Russia (Abramashvili and Koiava, 2018: 68). On 15th of July at Vaziani military base (near Tbilisi) was opened international military trainings "Emergency Response 2008". US, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan participated in the trainings. As a response of this, the

same day, Russia started military trainings "Caucasus 2008" with participation of 8 000 troops near the North border of Georgia[8] (Ibid). On 3rd of August, de facto regime in Tskhinvali started to evacuate population from Samachablo to North Ossetia. It was clear, that Russia was preparing for starting military actions in the region. After shooting down Georgian pilotless flying objectives in Gali in March and April, at the end of April Moscow increased number of Russian military troops in Abkhazia and sent military technique there (Abramashvili and Koiava, 2018: 33).

To avoid the escalation of the conflict, Georgian side offered different negotiation platforms to the parties (mostly to Russia). For example on 23rd of June, Mikheil Saakashvili sent a letter to by then Russian president Dimitri Medvedev, where Georgia proposed an initiative for de-escalation of the tense situation in Abkhazia. However Medvedv responded with the letter, where he mentioned that these matters were not Russia's concern and Tbilisi should continue negotiations with Sokhumi (Abramashvili and Koiava, 2018: 35).

The war between Russai and Georgia started on 7th of August 2008. There are two versions about how the war escalated. Moscow blames Georgia for starting the war, on which Russia responded with military actions to protect its citizens (most of the population in Samchablo had Russian passports). Here should be underlined that citizens had already been evacuated from Samachablo by the 7th of August. According to Georgian side, Tbilisi responded Russia's military actions when they bombed Georgian villages (Russia had already been bombing Georgian villages for several days before the war). On 7th of August war started in Samachablo and two days later, Russia military troops attacked Georgian cities and sea ports from Abkhazia. The consequences were too serious for Georgia, as Russia bombed Georgian cities, villages and military bases, claimed more territory than it had occupied before the war and forced over 26 000 Georgians to leave their homes. Around 410 Georgian soldiers and civilians were killed and more than 2230 were wounded (Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), 2015). Georgia lost the war.

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[8] Despite the fact, that Russian military training was ended on the 2nd of August, a big parto of military troops did not leave the place (Abramashvili and Koiava, 2018: 68)..

The war in 2008 refroze the conflicts once more. It also brought serious consequences for the further negotiations between conflict sides, as on the 26th of August in 2008 Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and Samachablo, after which Russian allies (Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru, Tuvalu and Vanuatu)[9] followed the trend (Gerrits and Bader, 2016).

2.4. Post 2008 War Period

The 2008 war has changed the scope of the conflicts – the ethnic conflicts between Georgians and Abkhazians and Ossetians changed into Russo-Georgian conflict. On 12th of August in 2008, Mikheil Saakashvili and Dimitri Medvedev signed the cease-fire agreement brokered by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy. The agreement obliged the parties to:

1. No resort to force;

2. A definitive halt to hostilities;

3. Provision of free access for humanitarian assistance;

4. Georgian military forces must withdraw to the places they are usually stationed;

5. the Russian armed forces will be pulled back on the line, preceding the start of hostilities. While awaiting an international mechanism, Russian peacekeeping forces will implement additional security measures;

6. Opening of international discussions on security and stability modalities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Civil Georgia, 2008)

After the recognition of Abkhazia and Samachablo by Russia, Georgia announced them as occupied territories and Tbilisi unilaterally withdrew from Sochi and Moscow agreements

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[9] Tuvalu (2014) and Vanuatu (2013) retracted recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

of 1992 and 1994, replacing these two agreements with 2008 agreement (Abramashvili and Koiava, 2018: 36). It should be mentioned that by these actions, Abkhazian and Ossetian sides were neglected in the conflict and the final step which brought the conflict resolution to dead end, was blocking OSCE and UN missions in 2008-2009 by Russia.

Despite the fact that the negotiations on the conflict resolution were weakening, Tbilisi tried to engage international community to resolve the Abkhazian and Samachablo cases. Thus Georgian government managed to start a new negotiation format on international level, where Russia was not any more presented as a moderator, but as the side. For prevention further escalation of the conflict, on the 1st of October 2008 the EU sent monitoring mission (EUMM) in Georgia. The group was staffed by around 200 unarmed civilian observers (Abramashvili and Koiava, 2018: 36). On 15th of October, in the Palace of Nations (Geneva), started a new 3+3 format negotiations, which brought all parties around the table. The representatives of EU, UN and OSCE were co-mediators and Russia, Georgia and US were participants. The latter engaged as an interested side. The head of the government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the chair of interim administration of former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast, along with the de facto representatives of Abkhazia and Samachablo attended the negotiation table. Russia insisted that de facto authorities be presented as equal participants, which was opposed by the Georgian side. The consensus was reached by creating one official and two unofficial working groups (ibid). Geneva Discussions was the first negotiations in post-war period, which had an official status. However Russia did not fulfil the 3rd and the 5th points of the peace-agreements, according to which Moscow should withdraw arm forces from occupied territories and allow EUMM to do its mission. Geneva Discussions did not have a real effect on conflict resolution and each meeting were ended without any result. Moreover in 2009 Russia opened so-called embassies in Tskhinvali and Sokhumi, which was also used as an instrument for the new wave of passportisation (Abramashvili and Koiava, 2018: 38).

Tbilisi started warming relations with Russia, Abkhazian and Samachablo from 2012 when the government has changed after the 2012 parliamentary elections. Tbilisi realised that it was necessary to settle relations with Russia, however it was impossible to restore

diplomatic affairs, until Moscow had so-called embassies in Tskhinvali and Sokhumi. Thus in December 2012 a new format of Georgian-Russian negotiations took place in Switzerland. In the negotiations (that aimed to discuss economic, trade and humanitarian relation issues) Georgia's Prime Minister's Special Representative for Relations with Russia Zurab Abashidze and Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin participated (Ibid: 41). As the topic of the meetings was not discussing the problems related to Abkhazia and Samachablo, the only format where the conflict resolution could be achieved, still remained Geneva Discussions (still without effective outcomes).

One of the first attemot to restore the relations between the conflicting sides, was by then Georgia's Prime Minister's (Bidzina Ivanishvili) initiative. On the 8th of August (5th anniversary of Russo-Georgian war) Ivanishvili officially offered Abkhazia and Samachablo to start direct dialogue. Moreover Georgian government conducted the activities to simplify the movement and transportation through the administrative boundaries. Despite these and other attempts from Georgian government to start a new stage of relations with Russia, Abkhazia and Samachablo, were not responded by the other side. In contrary, in January 2013 Russian troops started to build metal fences and spinning barbed wires along the administrative boundaries. This so-called "demarcation" claimed a lot of villages and agricultural land, which later caused series of kidnapping local Georgian citizens - accusing them of illegally crossing the "border". A time passed by, Russian troops started to widen artificial boundaries, which caused claiming more and more territories (kidnapping of peasants and widening the "boundaries" continues till today). Georgia awaited adequate reaction to Russia's "moving occupation" from international organisations and actors, however Russia-Ukrainian war and crisis in Syria moved Georgian issue backwards.

During the first year from being elected, Georgia's new government actively tried to improve relations with Russia and to move conflict resolution process forward, however until 2016 no real progress was reached. On 10th of March 2016 parties reached trilateral Abkhazian-Georgian-Ossetian agreement on exchanging prisoners. In Gali and near Ergneti village Georgians released four prisoners to the de-facto authorities in exchange of twelve

prisoners who spent long time in prisons in Abkhazia and Samachablo (Civil Georgia, 2016). The exchange had positive feedback from Abkazian, Ossetian, Georgian and International community. Many thought that this could have been the beginning of new stage of Georgian-Abkazian and Georgian-Ossetian relations. However two month later on 19th of May, Russian soldier killed Georgian citizen near the administrative boundary in Zugdidi which was followed by the demonstrations in Tbilisi.

In the beginning of 2018, it seemed that Georgian government was preparing for starting a dialogue with Abkhazia and Samachablo. However a new wave of demonstrations started in Tbilisi after that, when on 22nd of Fabruary, former Georgian soldier was kidnapped and taken to Tskhinvali, where he was tortured and killed[10] (Beraia, 2018). This fact did not change Georgian government's position on starting a dialogue and on the 9th of March, the Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashivli referred to Russian government, where he pointed out that Georgia as always, was ready to reach a real progress in Geneva Discussions. In his speech, Prime Minister also talked about the killing Georgian citizen two weeks earlier and mentioned that such activities is destroying the perspective of rebuilding Georgian-Russian relations. He also expressed readiness for staring direct dialogue with Abkhazians and Ossetians (Kvirikashvili, 2018). The Prime Minister's speech was followed by the Georgian government's Peace Initiative (Footsteps to Better Future), carried out in April. The new initiative aims to rebuild trust between the parties and to fasten reconciliation process. The new strategy has three main directions: 1. Improvement of trade relations along and through the administrative boundaries; 2. accessibility to high-quality education for the youth on both sides of administrative boundaries and 3. accessibility to those state services, which the country reached by integrating to Europe (visa-free movement, right of free-trade, etc.) (Tsiklauri, 2018). It should be mentioned, that despite the Georgian government's initiative to start face to face dialogue with Abkhazians and Ossetians is unilateral and has no response yet.

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[10] Georgians officials were actively involved and demanding Ossetian separatist regime to return the dead body to the family, however only a month later family managed to burry him.

After the 2008 war, it appears difficult to hold negotiations on ministerial level, because in that case Georgian government should accept the other side with the status of independent state. Georgian government can not do that, as it will be the official recognition of their status. Moreover Georgia can not renew diplomatic relations with Russia as the latter has so-called embassies in Abkhazia and Samachablo. That is why the Track Two Diplomacy is the best solution here - there are no official statuses while youth or representatives of the communities meet.

Chapter 3. Civil Society Organisations in Conflict Resolution in Georgia

This chapter analyses the involvement of CSOs in the conflicts in Abkhazia and Samachablo and categories them in different groups. The chapter is divided in five parts. The first part is a general overview of the analysed civil society organisations where the categorisation of the CSOs is given. The last four sub-chapters discuss four types of organisations– Grassroots Workers, Connectors, Activists and Negotiators. In each part the challenges which the CSOs face/faced are discussed in detail. The chapter also analyses those opportunities which CSOs have and are needed for resolving these challenges.

3.1. CSOs and Their Classification

There are around 27 000 civil society organisations registered in Georgia (National Agency of Public Registry, 2018), however very few of them work on conflict resolution. Out of around fifty organisations that have been researched, only twelve have beem selected for further analysis based on the following characteristics:

- Direct involvement in conflict resolution – the organisation should have conducted activities for resolving conflict issues. Indirect financing or supporting the peace-building is not considered here.
- Accessible and functional web/Facebook page – for discussing the involvement of the CSOs in peace-building it was necessary that they have a web page, where the information about their activities was accessible.[11]
- Availability of communication – even if the organisations had all the above mentioned characteristics, but it was impossible to contact them, then they were not selected for the thesis.

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[11] The CSOs about which it was known that they were involved in peace-building, but did not have relevant web pages or information on their web/Facebook pages, were not selected for the thesis discussion.

The selected twelve organisations are grouped in four categories: **Grassroots Workers, Connectors, Activists** and **Negotiators**[12]**.** Because of the fact that each organisation has more than one working area, they are grouped in at least two categories. It should be mentioned here that these twelve CSOs do not include those, which are registered in Abkhazia or Samachablo regions. The reason is the following: despite the fact that it was known which Abkhazian or Ossetian organisations were involved in peace-building, they do not publish relevant information about the projects or activities carried out in conflict resolution. Moreover after several tries to contact them, they did not respond   or who responded, refused to talk about their activities. The reason for their refusal and unavailability of the information about their activities in conflict resolution is discussed later. There are three foreign and nine Georgian CSOs among the selected organisations:

1. The Berghof Foundation - is an international non governmental organisation that works on prevention of political and social violence and trying to build sustainable peace through conflict transformation. To achieve its goals, organisation's activities stand on three pillars: conflict transformation research, mediation and dialogue support and peace education and global learning. The Berghof Foundation works in four different regions: in Africa, Caucasus, Latin America and the Middle East and North Africa.

2. International Alert - is an international non governmental organisation that has worked for conflict resolution in Georgia since 1997. The organisation focuses on both - Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts. International Alert carries out educational programs and activities in Tbilisi, Sokhumi and Tskinvali. It organises different projects, mostly round table meetings between Georgian and Abkhazian experts, where conflict issues are discussed and analysed. In Samachablo region, the organisation is presented from 2008, where it organises trauma healing programs.

3. Conciliation Recourses - is an international organisation that works with people and non governmental organisations to prevent violence and promote peace

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[12] These categories are discussed in the first chapter.

worldwide. The organisation started conducting projects in Georgia from 1997. It works on Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts and besides the reports and publications, Conciliation Recourses organises round table meetings between the conflicting sides.

4. The Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts- is Georgian non-governmental organization, which is based in Tbilisi. ISNC activities are mostly related to the conflict resolution mostly in Abkhazia and Samachablo. The institute works on confidence building, organizes public discussions, conducts projects and activities to help internally displaced persons (IDPs). ISNC's main mission is the promotion of peace-building activities; the protection of civil rights of IDPs and helping them to actively participate in public and political life. The Institute for Study of Nationalism and Conflicts is a coordination centre of the network Synergy (IDP Network Synergy), which unites 18 NGOs working on issues related to the internally displaced persons.

5. The Centre for Cultural Relations — Caucasian House - is a non-governmental organisation, based in Tbilisi. The aims of the organisation are the following: to contribute in building peaceful Caucasus region, where different nations coexist; to collaborate with other nations in the region and share Caucasian people's cultural values. The organisation creates intellectual and ideological foundation for peaceful development of the Caucasus. To achieve the goals, Caucasian House has three strategic directions: organising educational and cultural events; conducting research programs; working on peace policies and integration programs for ethnic minorities.

6. Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus - is a non profit civil society organisation, founded in Kutaisi (Georgia). The aim of the organisation is to support peaceful resolution of the conflicts through the grass root diplomacy. The association mainly works with internally displaced persons, youth, residents of conflict zones who do not have Georgian citizenship and have no access to qualified medical care. To contribute to conflict resolution, Peaceful and Business Caucasus conducts social, ecologic and economic activities. Georgians, Abkhazians

and Ossetians together participate in organisation's educational programs, seminars, conferences, festivals, forums and round table discussions.

7. Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti" - is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1995. The organisation mostly works with conflict-effected persons, supporting them with medical care and social and economic integration. The head office of "Abkhazeti" is in Tbilisi, however it has branch offices in five different regions (Kutaisi, Gori, Zugdidi, Batumi, Telavi) of Georgia. In conflict resolution process, organisation contributes with social and educational activities. Monitors the protection of rights of citizens on occupied territories and IDPs and provides them with necessary support.

8. Association "Woman and Development" - is a non-governmental organisation, founded in 2004 by local activists. The organisation aims to protect the rights of women, children and youth living in Georgia and support them with social and economic development. Women and Development also helps women to actively engage in peace-building process. The Association works on Samachablo conflict, attempts to promote peaceful environment in the conflict region and organises peace dialogues between women. Organisation's activities aim to strengthen justice and non-violence values and bring women from conflict to rebuild and develop peace together.

9. Association "Imedi" IDP Women's Movement for Peace - is an IDP women's movement for peace that organises activities to resolve the Abkhazian conflict. The Association aims to support women's engagement in peace-building process and supports conflict-effected IDPs psycho-socially and economically. Imedi was founded in 1999 in Zugdidi and is an organiser of more than 35 projects in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region (Neighbour region of Abkhazeti region). The main target groups of the Association are internally displaced women and youth, women from Georgian-Abkhazian mixed families and female citizens from both conflict sides.

10. The Caucasus Mosaic - is a non-governmental organisation working with ethnic minorities in Georgia. From 1990 Caucasus Mosaic was an initiative group that

conducted different social, cultural, humanitarian and educational projects. In 2009 group registered as non-governmental organisation. Most of the organisation's activities are social and educational mostly related to Ossetian minority living in Georgia.

11. The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi" - is founded by the initiative youth group living in Pkhvenisi in 2006. The name "Kartlosi" is composed by two words – "Kartl" as a meaning of "Georgian" and "Osi" as "Ossetian". The organisation has three work strategies: supporting development of local communities living in Shida Kartli region; contribute to peace-building and conflict resolution process and develop dialogue between Georgian and Ossetian communities divided by the Samachablo conflict (The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi", 2013). To achieve these goals, the organisation carries out different activities and projects. Kartlosi supports local civil society to develop their potential for actively involvement in conflict resolution process. The organisation is a partner of local and international non-governmental organisations and has close relations with governmental structures like: Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civil Equality, municipalities of Shida Kartli, etc.

12. Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum - was founded in 2007 by the Georgian and Ossetian civil society activists and non-governmental organisations. The organisation conducts dialogues between the societies from conflict sides in order to rebuild trust and environment for peaceful coexistence between Ossetians and Georgians. The Forum organises discussion meetings among those civil activists, experts and journalist who work on the conflict-resolution. One of the main priorities of the organisation is to engage youth in discussions and round table dialogues. The Forum organises study visits in European countries for Georgian and Ossetian participants, where they jointly engage in different activities. For today, the Forum unites more than 100 civil activists and five non-governmental organisations from both conflict sides (Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum, 2014).

Table #1. Categorising of civil society organisations.

	Grassroots workers	Connectors	Activists	Negotiators
The Berghof Foundation	✓	✓	✓	✓
International Alert	✓			✓
Conciliation Recourses	✓			✓
The Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts	✓		✓	
The Centre for Cultural Relations — Caucasian House	✓	✓	✓	✓
Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus	✓	✓		
Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti"	✓	✓		
Association "Woman and Development"	✓			
Association "Imedi" IDP Women's Movement for Peace	✓	✓		✓
The Caucasus Mosaic	✓	✓		

The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi"	✓	✓	✓	✓
Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum		✓		✓

The table shows the categorisation of the selected CSOs. Because of the variety of their activities, most of them belong to at least two groups.

3.2. Grassroots Workers

This category unites the organisations which work with the conflicting societies separately (i.e. activities of these organisations are not joint programs and in their projects, seminars and meetings only one party is engaged). Activities includes seminars and public lectures aiming to destroy stereotypes about the "other side". Trauma healing and educational programs are also included in this category. It could be said that these kinds of activities are a preparation stage for the further actions (which already are categorised as Connectors, Activists or Negotiators). This category can be considered as the first step of Track Two Diplomacy.

Because of such importance of this category, most of the researched CSOs are categorised in this group. However their activities are different. For example Berghof Foundation is focused on training young facilitators to gain and improve those skills which are necessary for knowing the methods of conflict resolution. After the training courses facilitators are sent to the conflict regions and in Tbilisi and there they organise new projects related to the conflict. Such courses, carried out by the Foundation were the series of training sessions "Young Facilitators Group" conducted from 2010 to 2014. Under these courses Georgian,

Abkhazian and Ossetian facilitators were trained at first separately and later together[13] (The Berghof Foundation, 2018). Similar activities where the project participants gain skills to engage in public activism are carried out by the Association "Woman and Development" and Association "Imedi" IDP Women's Movement for Peace. They organise training courses mostly for women under which the participants develop those skills that are necessary for actively engagement in conflict resolution and forming women coalitions. Under the seminars, they are taught how to organise projects and start their own activities (NGO Imedi, 2017), (Association "Woman and Development", 2011). Such kind of courses where future project organisers take training sessions, are important tool in conflict resolution as it mobilises interested people and gives them skills and opportunities to actively engage in peace-building process.

Besides the training sessions the organisations grouped in this category conduct trauma healing activities. They work with war-effected families and help them to participate in psychological seminars. After Russo-Georgian war 2008, International Alert is engaged in trauma treatment and educational projects that are carried out locally in Samachablo. The organisation started training programs for the teachers to develop their skills for working with traumatised children in schools (International Alert, 2018). In conducting trauma healing projects, the main working area is school, as the youth in most cases are psychologically highly effected and moreover they are the generation who can more easily accept the "other side" to the negotiation table. From Georgian CSOs who work in this field is Caucasian House, which organises the "Multinational Weekend School" where around 30 pupils from different ethnic groups study. The main focus is IDP youths who live in compact settlements in Georgia. The project aims to provide psychological rehabilitation for the youth from the conflict effected families and to help them to integrate into the society. The organisation also provides the participants with medical check before starting the project. Youth is engaged into different fun and educational activities after which psychologist give their parents recommendations (Caucasian House, 2016).

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[13] When facilitators from conflict sides were trained together, training courses took place outside the Georgia (in neutral states like Moldova, Armenia).

Association "Woman and Development" is also represented in Georgia as the organiser of training courses and workshops for the conflict-effected women where it helps them with psychological rehabilitation. The organisation which conducts trauma healing projects on both sides of the administrative boundaries is Association "Imedi". It holds psychological training courses and sessions to provide conflict-effected women and girls with trauma healing sessions. Representatives of the association visit females living in villages in both sides of the administrative boundaries and support them with necessary psychological service (NGO Imedi, 2017). Trauma healing activities are important as the members of the conflicting societies can not engage in negotiations with "other side" if they are still highly affected by the war.

Besides psychological treatment, some Grassroots Worker civil society organisations support Abkhazians and Ossetians with medical care services. For example Association Peace and Business Caucasus (APBC) organises social events, such as supporting Abkhazian patients to have medical tratement in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Zugdidi (Georgia). Medical support activities have been conducted since 2011 and in 2014 APBC also engaged Ossetian patients in the program. The Association believes that the medical projects can play a significant role in peace and confidence building between the conflict sides. As the number of the patients, who showed the desire to get medical treatment in Tbilisi, has increased in October 2017 APBC started a new medical programme, which aims to provide at least 400 Ossetian and Abkhazian patients with qualified medical service, to advocate and lobby these patient's interests and rights. According to the association the project will increase confidence and improve relations between ethnic Georgians, Abkhazians and Ossetians (Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus, 2017). Like the Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus, centre "Abkhazeti" supports citizens without Georgian citizenship in Abkhazia and Samachablo regions to get medical service. In 2015-2016 "Abkhazeti" financially supported patients from conflict regions (who were transported to Tbilisi, Kutaisi or Zugdidi) who needed urgent medical examination and treatment. In total, 23 patients were financed by the organisation (each patient was financed from 200 to 1200 Georgian Laris) (Charity Humanitarian Center "Abkhazeti", 2017). The

project was renewed in January 2017 and lasted until the end of the year. Activities like supporting Abkhazian and Ossetian citizens with medical care, increases patients' trust toward Georgians which is a successful move into conflict resolution. Medical projects are very interesting as they are started as Grassroots Workers' activities and are later changed into Connectors' programs.

Conducting educational activities for Abkhazian, Georgian and Ossetian societies is one of the main working areas of the organisations categorised as Grassroots Workers. In 2013 International Alert started working with Ossetian students to develop analytical skills about the conflict resolution. In samachablo, Conciliation Recourses, like International Alert, mostly focuses on educational programs. For example, the organisation supported public activist and the teacher at Akhalgori School Tamara Mearakishvili who after the 2008 war managed to kept school running. Conciliation Recourses helped Tamar Mearakishvili to purchase computer equipment in the school and arrange visits with the students to both sides of the administrative boundaries (Conciliation Recourses, 2018). Georgian CSOs are even more actively involved in educational programs than foreign ones. Here should be mentioned Caucasian House's educational project "People's University of Caucasian Studies" which focuses on youth living in Tbilisi, Zugdidi, Kutaisi and other Georgian cities. The project gives the participants deeper knowledge about the Georgian-Caucasian relations; Caucasian culture; economic, social, ecological and other issues. The project helps youth to get to know other Caucasian people's culture better. Caucasian House started the project in 2008 and since then around 80 students participates in it every year (Caucasian House, 2016). One of the main activities carried out under the "People's University of Caucasian Studies" is presenting the documentary film, recorded in 2003. The film was taken by the members of Caucasian House (among which was ethnically Abkhazian women, who worked in the organisation for a long time), who travelled in Abkhazia and recorded interviews with citizens. The film helps the audience to look at the conflict from the perspective of citizens (ethnically Abkhazians and Georgians) living in Abkhazia and to realise how the conflict destroyed friendly relations between Georgians and Abkhazians. Another organisation which is actively involved in educational programs

in the conflict regions is Caucasus Mosaic. Members of the organisation teach Ossetian language and history at Tbilisi public school 11[14]. Among the CSOs who organise youth camps and summer schools for local and IDP children and women from Abkhazia, should be mentioned Association Imedi. Educational activities help participants to get more knowledge about the "other side", look closer at their culture, life, and history. Educational programs help destroying stereotypes.

Grassroots Worker organisations conduct activities that involve discussions and round table meetings within the conflicting societies (however this discussions is not held between the conflicting parties but only within one part). Such activities are aimed to analyse the situation in the conflict regions, generate new ideas for conflict resolution and increase the knowledge about the parties which are involved in the conflict. International Alert in 2013 conducted discussion series among the Ossetian students (living in Samachablo and studying in Moscow). Under these series, Ossetian students were able to analyse the issues in the conflict region and find their own ways for resolving the conflict (International Alert, 2018). Besides the students engagement, experts, journalists, public officials and other interested groups are also involved in discussions. For example Women and Development organises discussions among the experts, journalists and peace-builder women who exchange their ideas about how to resolve the conflict (Association "Woman and Development", 2018). The organisation conducts discussion meetings in conflict region as well. In 2012 the members of the Woman and Development visited conflict-effected women in Ergneti in 2012. Under the visit, Ergneti women actively participated in discussions related to their social problems and conflict resolution. They shared their ideas about the activities that would help peace development in the region (Ibid, 2011). Association Imedi is also actively involved in organising round table discussions which are intended for finding ways to resolve the conflict. Among the Grassroots Organisation,

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[14] Ossetian language had been taught at the school since 1921 and in even an Ossetian sector was established in 1924. The sector had been functioning until the escalating the conflict in 1990. With the help and funding of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ossetian Sunday school was opened in 2007-2008. The Sunday school gives young people an opportunity to study Ossetian culture, traditions language and folklore. It should be mentioned, that The Caucasian Mosaic made a major contribution in functioning Sunday school and the teachers are the members and founders of the organisation (The Caucasus Mosaic, 2012).

whose activities involve the engagement of public officials is The Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts. In the conference "Policy of Conflict Resolution: Achievements and Challenges of the Last Three Years" participants discussed the ways to the conflict resolution in Georgia. The Georgian Ombudsmen, Minister of Reconciliation, the head of the government of Abkhazian Autonomous Republic and other political officials were given recommendations by the representatives of CSOs (The Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts, 2015). It should be mentioned, that the Institute of the Study of Nationalism and cConflicts engages political officials together with public activists and non-governmental sector in its activities. The organisation conducts discussions where the representatives of international and Georgian non-governmental organisations meet and analyse current situation in the conflict regions. This kind of discussion was "Scottish Independence Referendum and Elections in Abkhazia", that took place in May 2017. Program director of Conciliation Recourses Jonathan Cohen and Mira Sovakar were invited to the meeting as presenters (Caucasus Project Manager, Conciliation Resources). The aim of the meeting was to discuss similarities of the Scottish referendum in 2014 and so called presidential elections in Abkhazia the same year. Georgian State Minister for Ministry for Reconciliation also participated in the discussion along with experts and representatives of civil society organisations (Ibid, 2017). Involvement of public officials in the discussions can increase the outcome of the meetings, as the participant CSOs present new ways for conflict resolution and give recommendations to officials.

There are cases, when different activities are united in the projects conducted by Grassroots Worker organisations. For example The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi" organised a project "Mobile Cinema" which itself was educational, but the discussion series with participation of psychologists also was included in the project. Under the project cartoons and movies were released in nineteen villages located near the administrative boundaries. The main topic was peace and peace-building and the project was given a positive feedback, especially from the youngsters (6-14 years group). The main goal was to promote peace and encourage audience to engage in conflict resolution.

Discussions took place with involvement of psychologists after each movie evening (The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi", 2013).

Almost every activity was evaluated as a successful involvement in peace-building by the participants and project organisers. However CSOs grouped in this category face some obstacles while conducting the projects. The main challenges are the following:

- Poor intercommunication between the CSOs. – This problem was mentioned by several civil society organisations which were categorised as Grassroots Workers. In most cases local CSOs in Georgia see each other as competitors. The reason is that they try to receive funds from foreign organisations and perceive each other as rivals. They think that they might give benefits to other CSOs by sharing the ideas and talking about their future projects. As the representative of Caucasian House mentioned *"The problem is that civil society organisations compete with each other to receive funds from foreign donor organisations, thus they try not to share their experience and not to talk about their problems which are common to them in most cases"[15]*. As the local civil society organisations compete with each other, they have low intercommunication and no space to discuss common problems related to the conflict resolution. However they have the opportunity to generate new ideas together and conduct joint projects with better outcomes, as in most cases their interests and working areas are the same. Civil society organisations, working on Abkhazian and Samachablo conflicts should share information with each other about the activities, problems and strategies they have. By intercommunication they can analyse the issues together and devise more productive projects. They can share the experience and contacts from the conflict regions and conduct projects together as more coordinated work and intercommunication can increase their effectiveness.

- Difference between the agendas of international donor organisations and Georgian CSOs – this problem is somehow related to the previous one, but in this case the issue is the difference between the interests of foreign and local CSOs. Donor organisations often prefer to finance short-term projects but high in number, than to

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[15] Interview with the representative of Caucasian House (2018).

support long-term projects. When the local civil society organisation sees the necessity of conducting long-term programs in particular cases, there is a chance that they might not receive funds for such kind of projects from donor organisations. Thus sometimes CSOs' main focus from the conflict resolution changes into finding the funds. One way to resolve such kind of problem is to weaken the dependence on foreign donors by increasing the donations from the private sector. As the representative of Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti" mentioned - *"For reduction full dependence on foreign donors, CSOs should build connections with private sector to increase financial recourses needed for conducting more projects in peace-building"[16]*. Finding other legal sources for funding (along with foreign funds), gives CSOs more opportunities to engage in conflict resolution more actively.

- Poor communication between the CSOs and public structures – Despite the fact that some CSOs engage public officials in their projects, most of the organisations do not have connections with governmental structures. CSOs conduct successful projects for resolving the conflicts, however state administration not always has the information about them. Civil society organisations should give recommendations to public officials, offer them to participate in projects where they altogether will be able to generate new ideas for peace-building. CSOs should have close relations to state agencies, to share their experience and give/receive relevant recommendations.

- Small number of researches and analytical publications – To find new ways to resolve the conflict, it is important to have relevant information about the conflicting parties, about their expectations and current conditions – what they need and how they can be engaged in conflict resolution. Knowing these and other facts highly determines the outcome of the projects conducted in the conflict regions. However there is not much research or analytical articles about conflicts in Georgia that could be useful for the CSOs. Some CSOs mention the necessity of more researches - *"Part of CSOs should work on researches to better understand the*

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[16] Interview with the representative of Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti" (2018).

situation, needs, expectations and problems in the conflict regions"[17]. Among Grassroots Worker organisations, there are those who do their own research and publish analytical articles about the condition in conflict regions. However comparing to other cases (for example Israeli-Palestine or Northern Ireland), analytical literature about the ethnic conflicts in Georgia is too few.

- Forbiddance of foreign funding of local CSOs in Abkhazia and Samachablo - Foreign civil society organisations like International Alert, finds it difficult to financially support local NGOs in conflict regions to conduct projects. The reason is Russian law on "Foreign Agents", according to which each CSO which receives foreign funds, should register itself as foreign agent. If such organisation breaks this law, than it will be fined with up to 300,000 rubbles ($10,000) or its personal will be sent to prison up to two years (Freedom House, 2013). Despite the fact that Russia does not have a jurisdiction in Abkhazia and Samachablo, de facto regimes in conflict regions use Russian laws. As the representative of International Alert mentioned on of the main problems was influence of Russian law in Conflict regions - *"I guess, right now the biggest problem we face in south Ossetia is legal system; their law is inspired by the Russian law on foreign financing of civil society organisations"*[18]. Thus local civil society organisations prefer to refuse international organisations' funding, as they do not want to become a "foreign agent" in which case they will meet negative attitude from their own society.

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[17] Interview with the representative of Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti" (2018).
[18] Interview with the representative of International Alert (2018).

3.3. Connectors

Civil Society organisations that are categorised in this group, unlike the Grassroots Workers, focus on both conflicting sides simultaneously. They conduct the projects where the representatives of Abkhazian, Ossetian and Georgian societies meet each other, share and generate new ideas, participate in simulations, seminars and are engaged in different activities together. Connector organisations create the space where citizens from both sides of the administrative boundaries are able to meet and get to know each other better. Rebuilding trust and relations between the parties is one of the main goals of Connectors.

Like in the previous category, CSOs in this group conduct different activities. The Berghof Foundation focuses on history sharing and conducts projects, where Georgian, Abkhazian and Ossetian civil societies' members meet each other and tell their own personal stories of the war. The project "History, Memory and Identity" started in 2012 and aims to destroy stereotypes about "other sides" and make it possible for the participants to look at the perspective of the "other side". The Berghof Foundation believes that history, memory and identity are the aspects that can be used either to escalate conflict or to build peace. This project is motivated to support civil society representatives to share both positive and violent historical experiences to form more or less right view of the conflict. History sharing gives the participants opportunity to look at the conflict not only from one side's perspective, but from the other side as well[19] (The Berghof Foundation, 2018). As usual

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[19] The project "History, Memory and Identity" includes different activities, which have been carried out since 2012. "Remembering for Trialogue" was a seminar for young Ossetian, Georgian and Abkhazian facilitators that took place in Armenia between November 14th and 18th, 2012. Methods and theories of biographical work in conflict history were introduced under the seminar. The facilitators were given detailed instructions about how to record biographical narrative interviews. In 2013 The Berghof Foundation organised three-day workshops in Sokhumi (for Abkhazian participants), in Tbilisi (for Georgian participants) and in Vladikavkaz, Russia (for Ossetian participants). Young and older generations were engaged into the workshop, where they recorded their biographies and stories related to the conflict. Later the same year, Foundation organised workshops called "Their Stories". Separate groups of Georgian, Abkhazian and Ossetian participants in Sokhumi and Tbilisi got to know each others biographical stories, recorded under the "Our Stories" workshops. Under this program participants discussed the topics like: how the war was remembers

Abkhazian, Georgian and Ossetian youth are taught only one perspective of the conflict (mostly that, which is accepted by the society). That is the reason, why in most cases those societies find it difficult to understand the other narrative. Hearing the individual stories of the conflict makes the whole picture clearer that helps to better realise actual challenges of the conflict resolution. Along with telling their stories, participants[20] discuss historical issues through the dialogue where they analyse historical events and create joint view of the history. Similar project, where the participants shared their stories was conducted by "Kartlosi". Under the project members of the organisation collected forty stories from Ossetian and Georgian individuals living on both sides of the administrative boundaries. Later Kartlosi published those stories in the book "The Other Image of War" in 2012. It should be mentioned that the published narratives are only the positive ones, as the aim of the project was to change negative perception about the "other side"[21]. The stories in the book showed how Ossetians and Georgians risked their lives to save each other in 2008 war (The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi", 2012). Because of the language barrier the book was published in three languages: Georgian, English and Russian. As in most cases, joint meetings for the parties take place in the foreign country, in this case the presentation and discussion of the book was held in Erevan, from where Ossetian journalists took the Russian version to Tskhinvali. The activities which are related to history and memory play an important role in conflict resolution. Sharing the stories help parties to become familiar with each other, that is a part of Track Two Diplomacy.

Connector CSOs like the Grassroots Workers often organise educational programs, but in this case participants are involved in activities jointly. They bring Abkhazians, Ossetians

in "our" and "others" societies; how they should deal with the responsibilities and which stories they would like to share for creating a peaceful future (The Berghof Foundation, 2018). One of the most important parts of the whole project was three-day meetings in the Trialogue format that took place in Erevan (Armenia) between April 12th and 15th, 2014. Abkhazian, Georgian and Ossetian participant from the previous workshops were gathered together, where they listened each others stories. It should be mentioned, that two Trialogue events take place every year since 2014. The results of the meetings were recorded on videos in the Berghof Dialogue Diary.

[20] It should be mentioned that in this project different age-groups have participated.

[21] According to Temur Tskhovrebovi (Journalist and public activist from Tskhibvali, who collected the stories from Ossetian society), while collecting the positive stories, they faced a lot of problems as people found it hard not to perceive the other conflict side as enemy. However they could find those individuals, who realised that humanitarian aspects stand above the war (Aptsiauri, 2012).

and Georgians to engage in conferences, seminars, trainings and pubic lectures together. Notable active organisation in conducting educational joint programs is Caucasian House, which organises joint youth educational projects with support of its international partners (the latter is mostly chosen based on the country the meeting will be held). Active young participants from Sokhumi and Tbilisi training courses are selected annually and are sent to different European countries, where they together participate in meetings, discussions etc. The formats of the meetings are determined by the aim of the projects (It might be a study visit, round-table discussion or summer/winter school). In most cases other state's citizens are also engaged in the meetings. For example, Association Imedi From 1999 to 2016 organised conferences, seminars and trainings about peace-building and conflict resolution, in which participated Georgian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Armenian and Azerbaijani women. Those activities took place in Croatia, Latvia, Turkey, Armenia, Sweden and in other European countries (Association Imedi, 1999-2016).

As already mentioned, most of the joint activities (with the participation of all conflicting sides) are mostly held in foreign countries. The reason is that in most cases the societies in Abkhazia and Ossetia do not have positive attitudes toward those who participate with Georgians in Tbilisi or other Georgian big cities. Moreover participants form the conflict regions often agree to take part in the projects which are held in foreign countries. A good example of successful project, that took place in different countries is ten-month project "Team of Trust", which aimed to increase Georgian and Ossetian youth's engagement in rebuilding trust between the conflict-effected societies. The project, organised by Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum, was divided in tree stages during which participants took joint training courses in Serbia, Poland and Armenia. The first part, which was an introductory meeting, took place in Belgrade (Serbia) from 14th to 18th of November 2016. Participants met Serbian civil activists and experts, where they discussed the Balkan conflicts and youth engagement in the resolution of these conflicts (Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum, 2016). The next stage took place in Warsaw (Poland) from 19th to 26th of February 2017. The same participants from the first part of the project met youth in Warsaw State University where they altogether attended lectures about Georgian-Polish relations, Ossetians role in Georgia

and EU engagement in conflict resolution in Caucasus (Ibid). The final stage took place in Tsaghkhadzor (Armenia), where over 20 youngsters joined the project from Ossetian and Georgian side (so in total 30 participants were involved in the project). On the final part of the project, participants took part in training sessions about the communication and conflict resolution. They also engaged in simulation games about negotiations between conflict sides. At the end of the project, trust platform "Team of Trust" was created, which continues functioning after the project[22] (ibid). The project was successful as for six month Georgian and Ossetian participants were engaged in discussions, trainings and seminars together, after which they still keep connections with each other.

Caucasian House also engages foreign youths in their projects. In 2015 Caucasian House organised a project in Belarus for young specialist interested in ethnic conflicts. In the project Georgian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Belarusian, Moldavian, Ukrainian and Russian specialists were engaged. The participants discussed different ways for resolution the ethnic conflicts in Caucasus and Eastern Europe (the discussing topics were Georgian-Abkhazian, Georgian-Ossetian, Ukrainian, Transnistrian and Syrian conflicts) (Caucasian House, 2015). The outcome of the projects was positively evaluated, as the participants deepened their knowledge about the conflicts. The programs, where foreign citizens participate with Georgians, Abkhazians and Ossetians have its strong and weak sides. On the one hand, the format of the meeting is changed into international project, where not only Georgian conflicts are discussed. Thus the focus is broadened and the time for the meeting is also spent on analysing other topics as well. On the other hand, in international groups Georgians, Abkhazians and Ossetians can learn from other countries' experience where foreign participants share their practice on resolving the conflicts.

A different kind of educational project is youth camps. In summer/winter schools youngsters are gathered where they are engaged in fun and educational activities with other participants of equal age from the other side of administrative boundaries. Caucasus Mosaic is an organiser of such kind youth camps. For example, in 2008 the organisation launched a

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[22] The platform supports Georgian and Ossetian youths to keep relations and communications between each other.

summer camp in Bakuriani (Georgian resort). Youth from Ossetian Sunday school and internally displaced children were the participants of the camp. During the project Ossetian and Georgian pupils engaged together in different educational and fun activities (The Caucasus Mosaic, 2008). The aim of youth camps is to bring Georgian, Abkhazian and Ossetian youth closer to establish warm relationships between them from the young age.

Like youth camps, CSOs often focus on schools students. For example Kartlosi is an organiser of the projects, which help youngsters to look at the Georgian-Ossetian relations from the positive side. "The Future Seen through the Eyes of Children" was a project focused on young generation. The organisation provided children living in Gori region with the necessary painting tools. Children draw the paintings about how they see the future. Before the painting activities, youth participated in the workshops and trainings related to the tolerance and peace. From around 80 paintings ten were selected and were sent to the colleagues in Tskhinvali, where the same youth activity took place. In total 12 paintings of Georgian and Ossetian children were selected for the calendar, which was published and delivered to the societies living in both sides of the administrative boundaries (The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi", 2018). Despite the fact that the participants of the project were school pupils, the programme also effect on older generation as well. The printed calendars were sent in families of conflicting societies, where each member can realise, that children from both sides of the administrative boundaries think the same about the peaceful feature. Working with the youth is experienced and successful way for resolving the conflict as in most cases young generations has not seen the war, or actual military attacks. Moreover youth is thought that is more open to the changes and consensuses - *"Youth involvement in the conflict resolution is very important, as young generation have fewer stereotypes".[23]* That is why most of the activities of Connector organisations involve youth.

Some of the organisations aim to strengthen integration of conflicting societies on local level that is also a part of Connectors' activities. For example The Berghof Foundation conducted a project "Youth Action on Memory in Abkhazia", in which Abkhazians and

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[23] Interview with the representative of Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus (2018).

Georgian Megrelians, living in Abkhazia region, took part (The Berghof Foundation, 2018). They participated in joint public events and programs together. The aim of the project was to help the conflicting societies to reintegrate with each other. From Georgian CSOs, Kartlosi is the one which conducts reintegration programs on local level. In January 2011 the organisation started a six-month project to support Ossetian and Georgian youth living in the Shida Kartli region in different ways. The aims of the project were to mobilize Ossetian, Georgian and mixed families and help them to integrate with each other and to support these communities to develop their potential for actively engagement in conflict resolution (The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi", 2013).

One of the main projects, that Connector organisations conduct is social and economic programs. In most cases CSOs support locals from conflict regions to gain skills or connections necessary for developing or starting their own small businesses. Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus actively supports Abkhazians and Ossetians to develop economic and social partnership with Georgians. In 2011-2012 the Association organised a project "Supporting development of business partnership, mutual understanding, confidence increasing and inter-communal integration process between Georgians, Abkhazians and Ossetians" (Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus, 2013). Under the projects, members of the societies form conflict regions were supported to develop their businesses by connecting them to their future partners in Batumi and Tbilisi. Some of those Abkhazians who participated in the project adopted Georgian citizenship and continued business relations with Georgian partners. Like the Peaceful and Business Caucasus the Centre "Abkhazeti" aims to connect conflicting sides by conducting the economic programs. In 2015 the organisation conducted project, in which 68 people were engaged (37 participants were from Abkhazia region). In trainings, participants were introduced the ways to manage social enterprises. Targeted region was Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti (region near the administrative boundaries in the West Georgia), where 4 training courses were held. Besides the trainings, participants were actively engaged in 2 exchange visits in Imereti and Guria[24] and in two forums in Turkey (focused on confidence-building) (Charity

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[24] Imereti and Guria are regions in Georgia.

Humanitarian Center "Abkhazeti", 2015). Besides the training courses and seminars, where the participants meet their future business partners, CSOs also support them with financial assistance to further develop their economic activities[25].

Connector organisations often try to find the common problem for both conflicting sides, so they can be brought together to find the ways to resolve those problems. One of the best examples of such kind of activities is ecological problems. In 2014 Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus started a project "Georgian and Abkhazian communities for plant protection, clean and healthy environment". Georgians and Abkhazians participated together in destruction of Huphantria Cunea, Lymantria Dispar and other pests near the administrative boundaries (Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus, 2014).

From the other kinds of Connectors' activities, which aim to bring conflicting societies closer to each other can be mentioned Caucasian Mosaic's public event "Peace Messages", which took place in Ergneti in 2016. Ossetians and Georgians attended the event where they were able to look through the photo exhibition "Chronicles of Georgian-Ossetian Relations" (photos were taken out from families' photo albums). At the event, Georgian and Ossetian professionals jointly performed folk dances and songs (The Caucasus Mosaic, 2016). The aim of the program was to contribute in re-establishing a trust between conflicting sides by connecting them on the event and introducing similarities of their culture (folk dances and songs). Photo exhibition also can be evaluated as positive part of the event, as Georgian and Ossetian participant could see how their older generations lived peacefully together.

Like Grassroots Worker organisations, the CSOs in this category also face the challenges while conducting the projects:

- Negative perception from the societies from conflict regions – Every Connector organisation faced this challenge. In Abkhazian and Ossetian societies people

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[25] For example Centre Abkhazeti conducted a project in 2015, in which 100 individuals from Abkhazia region participated from which 80 participants received grant assistance. Under the project, eighty entrepreneurs, who live in Abkhazia, started or improved their own small businesses and some of them even established business relationships with their counterparts in Tbilisi (Charity Humanitarian Center "Abkhazeti", 2016).

mostly view the participation in projects with Georgians with suspicion. As the conflicting societies do not have much trust toward each other, Abkhazians and Ossetians negatively accept joint projects' participants from their community. In most cases, the participants form the conflict regions prefer to keep silence about their participation in projects with Georgians and even participating NGOs from Abkhazia and Samachablo do not publish information about the activities where they are engaged in with Georgian CSOs. It should be mentioned that this problem does not exist in Georgian society and in contrary participation with Abkhazians and Ossetians has a positive evaluation from people -*"Georgian people are very happy and pride to engage* [in the projects] *with Abkhazians and Ossetians"[26]*. However in Georgian society there are also those, who find it difficult not to accept Abkhazians and Ossetians as enemies. For example while Kartlosi was working on the book "Two Images of the War" organisers of the project faced some challenges during the project. As the founder of the organisation, Megi Bibiluri mentioned, "*it was not easy to collect positive stories from the Georgian society as the people first remembered the negative ones*" (Aptsiauri, 2012). The negative perception toward the "other side" can be changed by creating social acceptance in the society by conducting more joint programs. Societies are still traumatised by the war (both 1990s and 2008 wars) and find it difficult to participate in the same projects with the former "enemies". However youth is a part of society which feels the war trauma to a smaller extant and their involvement in joint programs is very important for peace-building.

- Weak communication between the societies - One of the main obstacles that CSOs faced is that Abkhazians and Georgians (as well as Ossetians and Georgians) work separately while they have the same problems. This is because they do not trust each other, but it is not all - they do not have many possibilities to communicate. Weak communication creates the other challenge that is related to the technical side - the partners from conflicting sides sometimes find it difficult to issue the

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[26] Interview with the representative of International Alert (2018).

necessary documentations for the project[27]. Moreover there is no guarantee that the planned and agreed project will be finished – as "Abkhazeti" had a case, when the partner organisation from conflict region, refused to participate, when the project was about to start[28].

- Administrative boundaries – One of the main challenges is the administrative boundaries, CSOs mostly face this problem, when they are trying to engage Abkhazians and Ossetians into economic and medical projects. *"Movement across the administrative boundaries is a challenge that is made more difficult by the Russian military troops on the Enguri Bridge"[29]*. So-called Russian border guards check every person, open their baggage, and ask for money to allow them to take bags with them and make different obstacles for them who tries to cross the administrative boundaries. As the result of this, it becomes difficult for Abkhazians and Ossetians to engage in the projects with Georgians.

- Fake news –Abkhazian and Ossetian societies are often influenced by Russian or local fake news. One of the cases when people were strongly affected by the false information is refusal from the participation in Caucasian House's project. In 2017 the organised meeting between Abkhazians and Georgians was disrupted by the fake news published in Abkhazian media. The information about the future participants of the meeting were collected from unknown sources and later fake news were published. It was said that the Abkhazian youth (with their names and surnames) were planning to meet Georgian public officials. The spread information was half true, as youth from Abkhazia were going to meet Georgian counterparts. It was a study visit to one of the EU countries with participation of Georgian and Abkhazian young experts, so among them there were several employees of state agencies though all of them were taking part on their personal capacity. However the society believed in the fake information and they started bulling those future participants. As a result of this, after publishing fake news, the Abkhazian

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[27] Interview with the representative of Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti" (2018).

[28] Interview with the representative of Charity Humanitarian Centre "Abkhazeti" (2018).

[29] Interview with the representative of Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus (2018)

participates decided to forbear from taking part and refused to join the project. It should be mentioned that in conflict regions (Abkhazia and Samachablo) the participants of joint projects (where Georgians also take part) might be put under pressure by different groups of society as well as exiting de facto authorities and other groups of interests (Russian state agencies). Sometimes the Abkhazian and Ossetian participants face possibility of losing their jobs or are attacked (criticized) in social media[30]. One of the ways to resolve this problem is that CSOs should spread correct information in the society as the fake news will not have a huge affect on public (like it often happens in Abkhazia and Samachablo).

- Small number of funds for the projects – Finding the funds for the projects is one of the main challenges for civil society organisations. Georgian CSOs are mostly depended on international funds that itself is not enough source to conduct a big number of projects. As Natia Chankvetadze – the representative of "Abkhazeti" mentioned, local private organisations should engage more actively in funding CSOs as the latter will have more opportunities to conduct higher number of projects in conflict resolution (Chankvetadze, 2018). Funding NGOs from private organisations will also decrease the dependence on donor organisations and the CSOs can be focused only on peace-building, than looking for the donors.

- Small number of researches – This challenge is faced by Grassroots Workers and Connectors at the same time. The necessity of analytical works is important for conducting new projects - *"First of all what CSOs need is to research and analyse the needs in the societies living in conflict regions"[31]*. Despite the existence of analysis and research about the conflict in Georgia, CSOs need to conduct face-to-face dialogues where Abkhazians, Georgians and Ossetians share research results in order to find the resolution of the conflict.

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[30] Interview with the representative of Caucasian House (2018).
[31] Interview with the representative of Association Peaceful and Business Caucasus (2018)

3.4. Activists

Civil society organisations, which are categorised in this group, use media and publications to mobilize people around one idea or to change the whole public opinion. In general, Activists organisations unlike the three other groups (Grassroots Workers, Connectors and Negotiators) are oriented toward masses. It should be mentioned that Activist CSOs are not as strongly developed in Georgia as it was in Northern Ireland or as it is in Israeli-Palestine conflict. In Georgia they do not organise demonstrations to demand something from any conflict party, but mostly are engaged with peace-building by using Media and online publications.

Activist civil society organisations use four types of media sources to affect the society and engage them in conflict resolution or positively change the public opinion. Media sources can be divided as TV shows, radio programs, printed media and Youtube channel. From the analysed CSOs the Bergof Foundation was the only one, which realises TV shows. Foundation organised TV program in Sokhumi in 2016. Before that, in 2015 "Biographical Salon" was founded in Abkhazia where the participants tell their stories, related to the conflict, and then discuss the issues. On the 10th of February 2016 "Biographical Salon" as a TV program was launched for the first time. TV program in Sokhumi has Georgian guests as well who participate in discussions (Berghof Foundation, 2016). The Foundation uses media to help individuals reach their voices to the whole public, that aims to strengthen the trust and change the negative perceptions in the public. The TV program is broadcast through the Abkhazian TV channel and its audience is mostly those people who live in Abkhazian region. However the Foundation organised a radio show "Cross Point" that is broadcast around the whole country (through radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty). In the radio program one or two parts of the biographical interviews (recorded under the whole project "History, Memory and Identity") are discussed by two guests. In the Autumn 2017, first time of the radio show, Abkhazian discussion guests participated (The Berghof Foundation, 2018). Radio and TV shows, give the Berghof Foundation opportunity to reach its voice

about the peace-building to masses and engage bigger number of citizens in the conflict resolution.

From Georgian CSOs, Kartlosi is the one, which uses radio as a tool for peace-building. In 2013 Kartlosi started a project – radio-discussion "Kartlosi Voice". The radio is broadcast in Shida Kartli region (that also covers the Samachablo territory). Discussion topics are selected based on surveys and research conducted by the journalists of the radio in both sides of the conflict. Guests discuss the topical themes in the region and sometimes Ossetian colleagues join them online from Tskhinvali. The radio is considered as one of the ways to communicate with Ossetian society (The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi", 2013). Radio recordings are also available on the Kartlosi's internet page.

Besides broadcasting the radio program, Kartlosi publishes newspaper in two languages (Georgian and Russian) for Ossetian and Georgian communities. Newspaper "Kartlosi" was first published in 2010 and was originally in Georgian but since 2012 the Russian version has been issued as well. The newspaper is printed with collaboration with the partner organisations in Tskhinvali. The main goal of the newspaper is to create the environment where Ossetian and Georgian communities on both conflict sides will be informed about the important events in the region (The Public Union Bridge of Friendship "Kartlosi", 2013). The newspaper aims to develop communications between societies, affected by Samachablo conflict and 2008 war. The publication is distributed to Georgian and Ossetian compact settlements in the region (also in mixed families) for free. The Russian version is sent to Tskhinvali and Akhalgori (to Shida Kartli region) and to Vladikavkaz (capital of North Ossetia). The articles in the newspaper are about the public figures who contributed in developing Georgiana and Ossetian relations by their work in culture, science, art, sport and in other related spheres. Articles about the cultural heritage and common cultural values are also published along with the articles about events, projects, activities and different programs related to the developing public diplomacy between Ossetians and Georgians. Georgian-Ossetian mixed families is one of the main foci of the newspaper where is showed the importance of mixed families in Georgian-Ossetian relations in peace-building. Rubric "Acitivities" includes photo reports from

different villages that describes the everyday life of communities, their problems and engagement in peace-building process.

As categorised in Activist organisations, Caucasian House uses Youtube channel to reach high number of citizens and change the negative attitude toward "the others" into positive one. One of the main projects of the organisation is an "Internet Diary of Caucasian House". Under this project, Caucasian House releases videos on Youtube about its projects where the activities are shown. On the Youtube channel (that has more than 1 400 subscribers) the organisation publishes the videos and documentary films about the culture of the Caucasian people (it is important that some videos are recorded in Abkhazian, Ossetian, Russian, European and different Caucasian languages). Some videos are discussions about the conflict issues in Caucasus, given by the different experts[32].

Other kinds of activities, that categorised CSOs in this group, are the online publications. The Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts conducts analytical research and publishes online. The institution issues the publications like: "Non-use of Force Agreement: Tbilisi at the Crossroads", "Cost of Conflict: Untold Stories. Georgian-Ossetian Conflict in Peoples' Lives[33]", "Conflicts in Georgia: Ongoing challenges and ways to solution"[34] and other analytical research. Most of the topics of the publications are related to changing public's negative attitude toward the societies across the administrative boundaries.

The main challenge for Activist organisations is societies' a negative attitude toward the "other side". CSOs categorised in this group, find it difficult to engage high number of people in their projects. However, it can be said, that as their activities are aimed toward masses, they use right tools (media, internet, printed press, etc) for reaching out to people and changing public opinion from negative to positive attitude.

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32 To see the videos visit the link: https://www.youtube.com/user/CaucasianHouse
[33] In the analytical research, authors record interviews with the Georgian IDPs and Ossetian people from Samachablo, who tell their own stories and share their views of the conflict.
[34] The publication offers the ways in conflict resolution and analyses new approaches in peace-building process.

3.5. Negotiators

Civil society organisations, which are categorised in this group focus on bringing conflicting sides to the round table. Negotiator CSOs conduct the projects, where Abkhazian, Georgian and Ossetian participants discuss the issues to achieve a consensus in a shared environment. Negotiations often help parties to generate those new ideas which are necessary for resolving the conflict. Achieved agreements on unofficial dialogues can also be transformed into official ones and that is why in Track Two Diplomacy conducting dialogues between the conflicting sides, stands on higher level than the activities of Grassroots Workers, Connectors or Activists.

Negotiator organisations focus on bringing parties to the round table, but the formats of the meetings are different. Some of them conduct dialogues between experts, others concentrate on youth and there are some CSOs that prefer to engage state officials and influential persons as well. For example International Alert promotes dialogue between Georgian and Abkhazian specialists. Under the project "Dialogue Through Research" that was conducted in 2008 the organisation started working with local Georgian and Abkhazian partner CSOs in order to present research, carried out by Georgian and Abkhazian experts on different issues of the conflict (experts discuss the issues at negotiation table) (International Alert, 2018). In most cases, Negotiator organisations conduct mixed dialogues with the representatives from different sphere. For example Conciliation Recourses organised an "Informal dialogue on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict" where Georgian and Abkhazian experts, civil society representatives, youth and influential persons participated. Three-day dialogue took place in London in June 2015. Participants exchanged their views on political development and analysed the opportunities and the challenges in peace process. They discussed economic issues, infrastructure projects, reforms and developments in Gali region (Conciliation Resources, 2015). Mixed dialogue was organised by the International Alert as well in 2009 where Abkhazian and Georgian politicians, business and economic experts and officials participated. Under the project

"Building relations across conflict divides", parties discussed and analysed economic regulations and issues in Abkhazia region (International Alert, 2018).

From Georgian CSOs Caucasian House is actively engaged in organising mixed dialogues. The organisation brings Georgian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Chechen, Russian and other Caucasian experts together to the round table to participate in discussions and dialogues about different political, cultural and educational issues. They jointly do analytical research and give recommendations about the solutions to the issues. Later, Caucasian House publishes analytical research online. Association "Imedi" is another Georgian CSO which works on conducting dialogues. Imedi organises public discussions among IDPs and between representatives of conflict sides. On 15th of March in 2017 the association organised a discussion series "Talking about Abkhazia". The discussion took place in the organisation's head office in Zugdidi, where the participants shared their stories and discussed the possible resolutions of the conflict (NGO Imedi, 2017). Georgian-Ossetian Civil Forum works mostly in Samachablo region, which conducts dialogues for Georgian and Ossetian civil society representatives where they discuss the main issues of the conflict and generate ideas for the conflict resolution.

During the dialogue, parties often generate new ideas, which are later turned into recommendations for the official structures. A good example is a forum, organised by Kartlosi in 2010. Georgian-Ossetian Forum was held from 11 to 16 of July in Laden (Netherlands), where Georgian and Ossetian participants generated the ideas about the conflict resolution. Under the forum, they elaborated on a text by which they addressed the participating sides in Geneva discussion (Voice of America, 2010). Because of this the forum can be considered as successful project, however organisers face serious challenges: after returning back to Tskhinvali from the forum, Ossetian journalist Temur Tskhovrebovi was brutally beaten[35], accusing him in treachery, because of participation in the forum with Georgians (Ibid). Once again the negative attitude toward the other conflicting side became a challenge also for Negotiator organisation like it was a problem in the cases of Grassroots Workers' and Connectors' activities.

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[35] The journalist was beaten by the members of de-facto local parliament.

As a Negotiator organisation, Berghof Foundation conducts dialogues oriented on youth participation. Under the project "Engagement Through Dialogue" Ossetian, Abkhazian and Georgian youths (23-30 years old) were brought together to engage in dialogue and study-visit workshops. Project took place in n Chisinau, Tiraspol, Prishtina and Mitrovica from 2009 to 2012 (The Berghof Foundation, 2018). Besides youth dialogue formats, Berghof Foundation brings state representatives to the unofficial meetings. The first project, carried out by the Foundation in Georgia was "Georgian-Abkhaz Track 1.5 Dialogue" between 1997 and 2006. In the dialogues Abkhazian and Georgian decision-makers and other influential individuals participated. From Georgian side, by then Chairman of the Government of Abkhazia Irakli Alasania and Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation Goga Khaindrava participated in negotiations. The Foundation in total organised 18 workshops with around 80 participants in each (The Berghof Foundation, 2018). It should be mentioned that the negotiation process between Georgians and Abkhazians was going positively in the late stages of the negotiations. Moreover by 2006 the parties already had the agreement about the non-use of force and it was expected that this agreement would be given an official status. However, President Mikheil Saakashvili refused to accept the agreement despite the fact that he was informed about these negotiations and the agreement itself. *"It was a big shock for us"*- mentioned one of the main organisers of the dialogue – *"because Saakashvili was informed about the negotiations long ago"*[36]. The refusal from the President was followed by the entrance of police forces in Upper Kodori. After which the Abkhazian side left the negotiation process.

Like the other categories, Negotiators also face challenges while conducting the meetings between the parties. However unlike the Grassroots Workers and Connectors, CSOs in this group face fewer challenges:

- Negative perception from the societies from conflict regions – the participants from conflict regions are afraid of the negative attitude from their own societies – they find it difficult to explain to their community the reasons of participation with Georgians and even after explanations, they are not sure that the society will

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[36] Interview with the representative of The Berghof Foundation.

understand them[37]. International Alert had cases when Ossetians at first agreed but later cancelled the participation. For increasing the effectiveness of CSOs' involvement in conflict resolution, they should check and push the government to engage in negotiations. CSOs should also take part in adopting legislations and work with people and government simultaneously so they altogether can resolve the conflict.

- Mistrust – Parties do not trust each other to the extant to actively engage in dialogue. In negotiations the unwillingness of decision makers and influential persons from both sides' to negotiate is the main problem. However CSOs manage to organise several round table meetings, as Grassroots Workers, Connectors and Activist prepare a platform for the negotiations.

Table #2. Types of organisations and their challenges.

Challenges	Types of organisations			
	Grassroots workers	Connectors	Activists	Negotiators
Poor intercommunication between the CSOs	✓			
Difference between the agendas of international donor organisations and Georgian CSOs	✓			
Poor communication between the CSOs and public structures	✓			

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[37] Interview with the representative of International Alert.

Small number of researches and analytical publications	✓	✓		
Forbiddance of foreign funding of local CSOs in Abkhazia and Samachablo	✓			
Negative perception from the societies from conflict regions		✓	✓	✓
Weak communication between the societies		✓		
Administrative boundaries		✓		
Fake news		✓		
Small number of funds for the projects		✓		
Mistrust				✓

Conclusion

Ethnic conflicts in Georgia have around thirty-year history. Firstly military confrontation started between Georgians and Ossetians in1990, which was followed by the war in Abkhazia in 1992. After the war Tbilisi lost control on those territories and in the late 90s, both of them claimed independence. Russia, EU, UN, OSCE and other international actors engaged in negotiations to resolve the conflict, however despite the signing of a cease-fire treaty, negotiations did not have a positive result. Moreover, Russia recognised Samachablo and Abkhazia as independent states and opened so-called embassies in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali. All these caused cutting diplomatic relations between Georgians and Russians and for Tbilisi it became more difficult to start new negotiations with Abkhazians and Ossetians (As Tbilisi could not accept the occupied regions as independent states on the negotiations table). Since the escalation of ethnic conflicts until the present day all official negotiations to resolve the conflicst have failed.

Because of the failure of official negotiations to resolve the conflicts, civil society organisations started working on this issue to resolve disputes on unofficial level. The involvement of civil society organizations in ethnic conflict resolution was the main focus of this thesis. The aim was to analyse how CSOs were involved in conflict resolution process, what opportunities existed for them and what challenges they faced while working on conflict resolution. To achieve the goals of the thesis, 12 civil society organisations (three foreign and nine local CSOs) were analysed based on their activities which aimed to resolve the conflicts. In total around 50 CSOs were examined and only those were chosen for the thesis which were directly involved in conflict resolution, had accessible and functional web/Facebook pages and it was possible to contact their representatives. These CSOs were categorised in four groups (Grassroots Workers, Connectors, Activists and Negotiators) according to their type, goals and activities. The categorisation made it easier to show what kind of challenges and opportunities each type of organisation had. The analysis of the involvement of civil society organisations in the conflict resolution was based on theory of Track Two Diplomacy. In order to discuss the challenges and

opportunities further, in-depth interviews were conducted (via Skype, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp) with the representatives of the analysed organisations.

The analysis showed that despite the successfully conducted activities in conflict regions, CSOs face different kinds of challenges that prevent them from being more actively involved in conflict resolution. Poor intercommunication between CSOs is one of the main challenges that Grassroots Worker organisations face. This problem is caused by the competition that the organisations have, when they are trying to receive funds. In most cases CSOs see each other as rivals so they try not to exchange ideas about their future projects. Georgian civil society organisations have the same issues related to the engagement of conflicting societies (poor intercommunication between the parties) and their activities will be more productive if they work together on those issues and even organise joint projects.

Georgian CSOs' dependence on donor organisations limits their ability to conduct all the planned projects. The problem is that sometimes there is a difference between the agendas of international donor organisations and Georgian CSOs. Thus some projects are not carried out because of limited finances. One of the solutions to this problem is increased donation from private sector. Permanent and stable financing of CSOs increases their capacity to conduct a high number of projects. However even in this case, civil society organisations should be careful while choosing sources of financing, as a donor that is unacceptable for the conflicting societies can become a reason for their refusal to participate in projects.

One of the main problems, faced by the Grassroots and Connectors type of organisations is the fact that little research has been performed on the topic of ethnic conflicts in Georgia, and that only a few analytical publications are available. The representatives of the organisations underlined the necessity of conducting analysis and research about the needs and the expectations in the conflicting societies, so the CSOs will be able to conduct the projects based on research.

The common challenge for Connectors, Activists and Negotiators was the negative social perception of the other groups, which sometimes spilled over to the projects the CSOs were conducting in the conflict regions. Members of Abkhazian and Ossetian societies had negative attitude toward participation in projects with Georgians. Those who had participated in joint activities, after returning home were not accepted positively by the fellow-citizens (there were cases when they were bullied and even beaten). This was a serious challenge for CSOs as it became more and more difficult to bring Abkhazians and Ossetians to participate in the projects with Georgians. The negative attitude toward "the other side" can be found in Georgian society as well, however such cases are very few and mostly in conflict-affected communities. One of the opportunities to mitigate hostile perception is to engage youth in joint programs as the young generation is not as much affected by the war as the older one.

The research showed that the existence of administrative boundaries very often became a problem for CSOs. First of all, the so-called Russian border guarders frequently prevent Abkhazians and Megrelians from crossing the Enguri Bridge if they were engaged in economic relations with Georgian side. Sometimes project participants from the conflict regions were stopped on administrative boundaries when they tried to engage in joint programs with Georgians.

To sum up, it could be said that there are several challenges that makes CSOs' engagement in conflict resolution difficult. However civil society organisations conduct various projects to change stereotypes in conflict societies and bring them together to the negotiation table. In some cases CSOs succeeded in building economic or social relations between Georgians and Abkhazians and Ossetians. It should also be mentioned that civil society organisations do not have significant influence on decision-makers yet, but some of them managed to engage public figures in unofficial meetings with the participation of representatives from conflict regions. Despite the CSOs active involvement in conflict resolution, the role of Russia cannot be neglected as it continuously slows down conflict resolution. There were cases of spreading fake news about the Abkhazian youth who were planning to participate in project with Georgians after which the prospective participants refused to join the

project. The killing of a Georgian citizen and a former Georgian soldier by the Russian troops in conflict strengthened a negative perception toward Abkhazians and Ossetians in Georgian society.

Despite the challenges they face, CSOs continue to conduct projects aimed at conflict resolution. Grassroots Workers and Connectors are those which have the highest number of activities carried out in conflict regions. Negotiators are also active, however there does not yet exist a case when an agreement reached at an unofficial meeting, has become the basis for an official treaty or document. There are not many activist organisations in Georgia and they are mostly oriented toward using media, internet and printed publications to positively affect the public and mobilise people around the idea of resolving the conflict.

It should be mentioned that not much has been written about the involvement of CSOs in conflict resolution in the Georgian case, so this thesis can fill this gap in the literature. As the thesis analyses the challenges and the opportunities that the CSOs have in conflict resolution, civil society organisations working on peace-building, can rely on this work and can use this research in planning their projects. Moreover the thesis can provide insights to future researchers working on this topic who might aim for a more comprehensive assessment, examining more CSOs with more challenges.

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