

Three types of forgetting: on contested states in Europe

Bruno Coppieters

Vakgroep Politieke Wetenschappen, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussel, Belgium

ABSTRACT

The article examines the extent to which secessionist conflicts involving contested states are forgotten. A distinction is drawn between three particular meanings of forgetting. These conflicts are not forgotten in the sense that the parties involved cease to attach crucial importance to them—even the lack of prospects for overcoming these conflicts does not allow the parties to disregard them. They are, however, liable to be forgotten in the sense of not being prominent on the international security agenda. In terms of knowledge, they are certainly not forgotten: they generate large quantities of military intelligence, observer mission reports, policy papers and academic analysis. The article examines these various types of non-forgetting and forgetting and the relationships between them.

Introduction

Forgetting is not necessarily a sign of failure. On the contrary, the ability to forget about a conflict may be considered a political virtue. Forgetting—like remembering—is a traditional aspect of community and nation building, and it is also an ancient precept in conflict resolution.¹ One of the altars in the Parthenon in Athens was dedicated to Lethe, the Greek goddess of forgetting: it symbolized the duty of consigning the suffering of civil war to oblivion. The duty of forgetting civil strife may also extend to the obliteration of all forms of resistance from public memory. After the *reconquista* of Antwerp in 1585, the Habsburg authorities declared that they wanted ‘to remove and bar all cause for distrust and dissidence’. They decreed that the memory of the city’s Calvinist past would be ‘erased and undone like matters that have never happened, without them ever being allowed to be researched, inquired or reproached’.² Forgetting was further promoted as a device for guaranteeing peace between states. Two of the treaties signed in Westphalia (1648) decreed that all enmity encountered during the armed troubles should be buried ‘in eternal oblivion’.³ Present-day concepts of conflict resolution and transitional justice agree with the view that past atrocities and severe injustices have to be overcome in order to bring about conflict resolution, but their precepts of reconciliation and forgiveness are based on remembering the past and acknowledging previous suffering and injustice rather than on setting them aside.⁴ These politics of memory now form part of comprehensive strategies for establishing a dialogue between the parties to a conflict.

CONTACT Bruno Coppieters  Bruno.Coppieters@vub.be

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In contrast to the specific instructions to forget imposed on the defeated party by the victorious one, or agreed between conflicting parties, the present article explores types of forgetting and non-forgetting in secessionist conflicts in Europe⁵ where neither the suppression of a contested state through the use of force nor the resolution of the conflict through a peace settlement appears feasible in the foreseeable future. Prescriptive forgetting through the use of force, or forgetting through reconciliation, are therefore excluded. Strategies based on a concept of transitional justice are likewise difficult to implement in a political conflict involving a contested state.⁶ Under such conditions, a party to the conflict may ask whether the conflict should simply be left behind, by making no further efforts to resolve it. It would then cut its losses in order to address political problems that may be dealt with more fruitfully. This particular meaning of forgetting finds expression in the colloquial prescription to ‘Forget it!’⁷ This is the first meaning of forgetting that will be considered in the present analysis. And in this case, non-forgetting means that such an option is considered unacceptable and that further attempts should be made to achieve one’s goals. Secondly, the process of forgetting may refer to the position of a conflict on the security agenda of external actors—those who are expected by the conflicting parties either to grant recognition or to engage in a policy of non-recognition. The consequences of their attitude for conflict dynamics have to be assessed. In this case, forgetting may stem from indifference, or even from a failure to give due care, by ignoring one’s responsibilities. Thirdly, the concepts of forgetting and non-forgetting may refer to a loss of knowledge about the various aspects of the conflict processes. The application of each of these particular meanings of forgetting and non-forgetting requires a nuanced comparative analysis, and the interrelationship between them needs to be explored.

The literature on the concept of forgetting, and related concepts such as memory and remembering, is vast. Their relationship to conflict processes is explored in different disciplines, ranging from philosophy to psychology to history.⁸ All these approaches emphasize the constitutive role of forgetting and non-forgetting in forging identity. The term ‘forgotten conflict’, by contrast, is used only casually in the literature on contested states, where it indicates that these conflicts have been observed to be both neglected and relatively unknown.⁹ It may be worth exploring to what extent these conflicts are indeed disregarded. This article is greatly inspired by Paul Connerton’s study on seven types of forgetting, where he disentangles ‘different meanings that cluster together under this single term’.¹⁰ This article introduces and defines three types of forgetting and non-forgetting which are relevant to secessionist conflicts involving contested states.¹¹

Each of the three types of forgetting and non-forgetting discussed here is defined in terms of a conflict’s position on an agenda: the domestic political agenda of the conflicting parties, the international security agenda, or the agenda of research and international institutions that produce political analysis. Literature on agenda setting points out that the attention paid to issues is a matter of degree: they are pushed further up or down an agenda rather than simply being ‘on’ or ‘off’ it. But the dichotomous type of distinction is still useful for indicating whether the attention issues receive is serious or merely token,¹² and in this particular context the same may be said of the distinction between forgetting and non-forgetting.

In agenda setting, the process of forgetting is inextricably linked to that of non-forgetting. Both involve decisions that are more or less deliberate, and that concern either the domestic political agenda of the conflicting parties, in the case of the first type of forgetting analysed here, or the international agenda, in the case of the second type. Knowledge about conflicts (in the case of the third type) is found in academic literature, but also encompasses more practical forms of understanding, whose primary aim is to inform the policy process—such as military intelligence, observer mission reports and policy papers. How the acts of forgetting and non-forgetting feature on these two kinds of research agendas must also be examined.

These three types of forgetting do not concern realities that are independent of one another. An analytical distinction between the types should demonstrate its usefulness by being able to produce a better understanding of how the domestic and international political agendas regarding secessionist conflicts relate to each other. Secessionist conflicts do indeed have their origin in domestic politics,¹³ and they are therefore to be defined as intra-state conflicts—but the creation of a contested state brings the conflict into the international area, so the conflicts must also be seen as interstate ones. The relationship between the two first types of forgetting and non-forgetting reflects how the behaviour and attitudes of actors on one level of conflict relates to the behaviour and attitudes of actors on the other level. The third type of forgetting and non-forgetting gives us a better understanding of how the production of knowledge can address the severe tension between the two levels—the incapacity to forget on the domestic level, and the risk of forgetting on the international level.

The three types of forgetting are explored here in the context of intractable secessionist conflicts in Europe involving contested states. Political science uses a variety of terms when referring to these political entities resulting from a breakaway. The concept of a *de facto* state is the one most widely used.¹⁴ This term refers to a number of measurable criteria, such as a government that exercises control over a given population and a specific territorial area over a substantial period of time, and that seeks full constitutional independence. The concept of a ‘contested state’, by contrast, refers to two kinds of challenge associated with the non-recognition of a political entity as a state. First, a contested state is not recognized as a state by the state from which it is breaking away, or by a significant part of the international community, despite its claim to have all the basic features of one. Second, the term ‘contested state’ further indicates that these claims (of possessing the basic features of statehood) are also contested. This second type of contestation refers to knowledge or cognition¹⁵—two characteristics that apply to the cases examined in this article. Nagorno-Karabakh, Northern Cyprus, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria, Kosovo, Donetsk and Lugansk¹⁶ are not recognized by the whole of the international community and, moreover, in political debates and scholarly literature the question is raised whether they may be considered states in terms of their sovereign exercise of power: in other words, their constitutional independence of external actors.¹⁷

The fact that all the contested states involved in these conflicts receive substantial external economic and military support from a patron state (or a kin state, as in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, or several patron states in the case of Kosovo) makes their destruction—one of the options at hand for resolving a secessionist conflict involving

a contested state¹⁸—difficult to conceive of. This relative security does not rule out occasional skirmishes or even a major military confrontation—as in the case of the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh, or in eastern Ukraine.

The distinction between the three types of forgetting and non-forgetting is used here with respect to a wide variety of secessionist conflicts involving contested states. The degree of international acceptance of these states differs widely. Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Donetsk and Lugansk are recognized exclusively by other contested states, whereas Kosovo is recognized by about two-thirds of UN members.¹⁹ There are further major differences between them regarding their historical origins and geopolitical significance, and the types of mediation and support for the parties involved. We need to see whether the distinction between the three types of forgetting may be considered adequate for interpreting and providing a better understanding of these diverse conflicts. We are working with illustrative cases. The case study method is used here to uncover the actual meaning of each type of forgetting in a particular context.

In the following, we first analyse the processes of forgetting and non-forgetting in the domestic and then the international political arenas, with illustrations of each of these two types from all the cases discussed. We will then enquire into the process of forgetting and non-forgetting in the production of knowledge—which constitutes the third type. The comparative conclusions analyse the strained relations between the domestic and international levels regarding the processes of forgetting and non-forgetting, including the kind of knowledge these tensions generate.

The domestic political agenda

In some of the conflicts involving contested states, a mutually acceptable compromise has been in view at certain periods, but productive negotiations have lasted only a relatively short time. Intensive negotiations on a settlement took place on the reunification of Cyprus, for instance, in 2003–2004 and 2015–2017. In such conflicts, the default position for negotiations is mostly a standstill.

Opposing parties confronted with deadlock in a secessionist conflict do not have equal freedom of choice when it comes to attaching importance to the conflict. Here, contested states have no real alternative. The hurdles facing them in their efforts to normalize their relations with the outside world are high, and they are forced to confront them, regardless of the difficulties they may encounter. This is the very condition of their survival as states. For this reason, they cannot leave the conflict behind. Under these circumstances, the conflict cannot be relegated to the past, and remains suspended in the present. Pristina, for instance, does not deny that its external relations suffer from severe constraints owing to Kosovo's partial isolation, even though the country can count on significant diplomatic support. The lack of full recognition is a major impediment to Kosovo's participation in regional and international organizations, including the EU, and it is therefore obliged to pursue its efforts to achieve international acceptance.²⁰ The Abkhaz authorities likewise stress that an increase in the number of declarations of recognition remains a crucial foreign policy objective.²¹

This policy priority does not mean that the breakaway entities acknowledge a longing for international recognition by the state they have broken away from. Such a hope would indicate a kind of dependence and would go against their sense of dignity.

During the EU-mediated negotiations with Serbia, for instance, Pristina stated that there were limits to Kosovo's readiness to pursue this dialogue. Never-ending negotiations and lack of practical implementation were putting its patience to the test.²² The Abkhaz authorities, for their part, repeatedly stressed the lack of concern, and also the indifference, of their public regarding Georgia's counter-secession policies and Georgian domestic affairs generally.²³ Such statements serve to demonstrate their factual independence, including in the public mind.

Governments of states confronting breakaway (Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine) or at the origin of irredentist conflicts (Armenia with the dispute about Nagorno-Karabakh, or Russia with Donetsk and Lugansk) are in a different situation. In theory they have more leeway than a contested state in determining how much importance they wish to attach to such a dispute. These states may have lost control over a part of their territory, or may covet the territory of a neighbouring state, but such contestation involves only a limited territory and population. Relinquishing territory does not challenge their international sovereign status or statehood, particularly in cases of irredentism. Where the cost of a conflict over a contested territory becomes too heavy to bear, theoretically they have the option of letting it go and prioritizing issues that they can address more fruitfully. But such a decision involves the question of national identity, and may therefore be perceived as treasonous and lead to a loss of domestic legitimacy. This means that, even though such decisions do not imply the loss of statehood, they may potentially lead to a loss of power on the part of those responsible.

Simple neglect or even indifference on the part of the authorities towards the breakaway territory, as indicated in the first meaning of forgetting described in this article, does not necessarily imply recognition of the independence of the breakaway entity. But if a central government abandons its efforts to reassert its dominion over an uncontrolled territory it is betraying a lack of faith in its ability ever to recover it. Such a position may be regarded by other states as an invitation to recognize the breakaway entity²⁴—a risk that public opinion in the country confronting breakaway will no doubt consider unacceptable.

Georgia's Rose Revolution of 2003 provides an illustration of the potential consequences of neglect and indifference. The Shevardnadze regime was accused of having forgotten about Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This was one of the accusations fuelling the revolutionary process that led to the forced resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze in November 2003. The main charge had to do with corruption.²⁵ The two accusations were interlinked. The opposition's argument was that the Georgian leadership was profiting, both politically and materially, from the deadlock in the negotiations on these conflicts. The corruption of the elite had thus led to a failing state that was proving incapable of achieving reunification. Shevardnadze was accused of having deliberately turned a blind eye to—or even actively promoted—the creation of informal trade links with South Ossetia, which allowed for cross-border trade with Russia without customs duties being paid. The *laissez-faire* policy towards the breakaway territories had found additional expression in Shevardnadze's unwillingness to re-establish his authority over the Georgian region of Ajaria, whose local authorities did not actually secede from Georgia but nonetheless remained outside governmental control. In the eyes of the Georgian opposition, such practices showed the weakness

of the state and the strength of its corrupt elites. All this was equated with criminal negligence, and even with high treason.²⁶ These accusations became one of the main mobilizing factors in the Rose Revolution—showing that it can be dangerously destabilizing for a political leadership to neglect the question of breakaway territories in a divided state, particularly if this neglect is associated with corruption and a general policy failure, when it may, with good reason, be regarded as a failure to devote due care to one's political responsibilities.

This revolutionary discourse did not, however, lay the foundation for a successful strategy to recover the lost territories. On the contrary. The tension heightened, leading to the use of force. The Georgian-Russian war of August 2008 led to Georgia's military defeat and Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2012 a new government came to power in Tbilisi, under the leadership of Bidzina Ivanishvili. It took a more moderate position towards Russia than its predecessor, and made diplomatic efforts to accommodate it in various ways, but these did not resolve the conflict over the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia still maintains that the conflict can only be resolved if Georgia forgets about the idea of reunification.²⁷ But Tbilisi refuses to count these territories as lost, or to leave this question behind, despite the substantial cost of an active counter-secession policy. This is a stance that leads to political tension with Russia, running counter to Georgia's declared objective of improving these relations. It also burdens Georgia's relations with NATO with a problem the Atlantic Alliance is unable to resolve. None of this, however, means that the Georgian authorities would ever follow the precept that it is better to cut one's losses if the alternative is to lose even more.²⁸ The government has not forgotten the lessons of the Rose Revolution.

The fact that public debate in a country facing secession does not focus much attention on the division of that country does not mean that the government can forget about it. The case of Transnistria is a good illustration of the role of public opinion. Opinion polls in Moldova over the period 2000–2015 point to the marginal importance of a settlement of the Transnistrian problem in the eyes of the public, as compared to issues such as 'fighting corruption'.²⁹ In November 2015, only 9% of people included it among their first three priorities. But even though there is no strong public pressure on the Moldovan authorities to find a solution for Transnistria, it would still not be feasible for them to abandon their counter-secession policies. Despite the low priority given to the reunification issue in opinion polls, such a step would be perceived by the population as a form of surrender.³⁰ Here, the issue of national sovereignty and identity trumps other political interests.

Nor would the prescription to leave a conflict on sovereignty behind help overcome the division of Ukraine. There has been little belief, on either side of the front line, that the provisions of the second Minsk agreements of February 2015—such as a restoration of Ukrainian control over its eastern borders, or the implementation of special status provisions in the governance of its eastern regions—should or will be implemented. The cost of confronting Russia militarily and diplomatically may be considered enormous for Ukraine, but it is still perceived as less than the cost of the compromise that would be required for a global settlement with Russia and the breakaway regions, or the cost of leaving an unresolved conflict behind—first and foremost, in terms of legitimacy. The Ukrainian authorities regard the policy of holding Russia accountable for its aggression as a moral imperative, in line with the constitutional clause that states that 'the territory

of Ukraine within its present border is indivisible and inviolable'.³¹ Acting otherwise would raise 'the question of what our soldiers were fighting and dying for all these years'.³²

The ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan in their conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and the territories occupied by Armenia remains fragile. The 1994 truce that ended the 1988–1994 war has not been followed by any significant progress at the negotiation table. There continues to be sporadic fighting along the ceasefire line, and in April 2016 there were major clashes.³³ Armenia has not been able to turn its conquests into a diplomatic victory, and is also unable to increase its military pressure. Since the 1990s Azerbaijan has largely overcome its military weakness by turning its newly acquired economic resources into building its army, but it still faces Russia's unwillingness to accept any radical change in the balance of power in the South Caucasus. This does not completely rule out the choice of a major military offensive for Azerbaijan, but if undertaken this would not have a reasonable chance of success—success here meaning that it would greatly strengthen Azerbaijan's position in status negotiations. Defeat, meanwhile, could in this particular case entail a major risk that the Azeri regime might not survive. Azerbaijan is thus unable to overcome the deadlock through compromise, or through the use of military force, or, alternatively, by turning its back on the conflict. So it cannot forget, but the price of not forgetting is a constant risk of destabilization and war.

The conflict over Cyprus has been stalemated for more than four decades. The rejection of the UN plan for reunification—the so-called Annan plan—by a Greek Cypriot majority in the referendum in April 2004 was a severe setback for conflict resolution prospects, but did not end the UN-mediated negotiations between the two communities. These diplomatic efforts resumed in 2008. Some observers and think tanks felt such efforts for reunification were in vain, especially in a context where new ideas and perspectives were lacking. This was the view in particular of the International Crisis Group (ICG), as could be seen in its policy recommendations to the conflicting parties. In March 2014 an ICG publication pushed for a radical rethink of the feasible options, in particular, independence for Northern Cyprus.³⁴ It assumed that the two parties had been driven too far apart over time to have much chance of succeeding in their attempts to come back together, and future negotiations would most likely either stall or lead to stillborn proposals for reunification. Nor was the status quo a long-term option. In this situation, the ICG regarded partition as preferable. Forgetting about reunification seemed a reasonable option, particularly as partition could in principle take place within the EU. In exchange for recognition of their independence, and EU membership, the Turkish Cypriots would have to make a number of far-reaching compromises in order to satisfy the traditional demands of the Greek Cypriot community. Those would include the return of a large part of the Cypriot territory and compensation for property lost, and Turkey would have to withdraw its troops. In its policy recommendations to the leaders of the Greek Cypriot community, the ICG asked it to 'privately explore, alongside talks on federal reunification, a full range of settlement options within the EU framework'.³⁵ It is interesting to note that the ICG recommended exploring such choices 'privately'. It would indeed have been political suicide for any Greek Cypriot government to declare openly that it intended to forget about reunification.

The unexpected victory of Mustafa Akinci in the presidential elections in Northern Cyprus in April 2015 led to a breakthrough in the negotiation process, and seemed at first to contradict the ICG's assessment. His declarations in favour of an agreement on reunification on the basis of substantial compromises, followed by a positive response from the Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades, significantly increased the likelihood of success of new negotiations. These negotiations, however, were confronted with the difficulties the ICG report had pointed out, such as the problem of designing effective decision-making mechanisms and security arrangements.³⁶ The failure of their negotiations in July 2017 did not mean, however, that either of the two parties was able to leave the conflict behind. They are unable to make joint efforts to arrive at a solution, but over and over again they keep finding that any sustainable solution has to be mutually acceptable.

The vast majority of EU member states—22 out of 27—recognized Kosovo as an independent state in 2008. They considered that negotiations on single-state solutions were bound to fail. Sovereign equality between Kosovo and Serbia, by contrast, would allow for joint integration within the EU's regional framework. Accession to the EU would lead the two sides to cooperate with one another. Serbia would have to recognize Kosovo, as one of the conditions for accession. This was a view supported by French diplomacy, which felt that this position represented no departure from its traditional closeness to Belgrade, as it was in Serbia's best interests to forget about Kosovo's reintegration.³⁷

Opposition to recognition of Kosovo from Spain, Cyprus, Slovakia, Romania and Greece, however, forced the EU into a solution where full recognition was not required from Serbia. But Brussels still made Serbia's membership prospects entirely dependent on progress in its political dialogue with Kosovo. Engagement in the negotiations and good faith in the implementation of the agreements constitute a crucial benchmark. Furthermore, Serbia needs to tolerate Kosovo's effective participation in regional settings. In the view of the EU before EU membership for Serbia can be envisaged, the whole normalization process and the creation of good neighbourly relations between Serbia and Kosovo need to be concluded by a legally binding overall agreement.³⁸

The Serbian government does not cherish the hope that reunification is feasible. It has long since ceased to promote affirmative policies on the reintegration of Kosovo. It does not oppose the EU's policies of conditionality, and it accepts various forms of 'normalization' with Kosovo. It has even accepted the fact that the Serb minority in the north of Kosovo will be institutionally integrated with Pristina. But such concessions to Brussels for the sake of EU membership do not mean that Kosovo is or should be forgotten, and the issue has not disappeared from the government's agenda or from the media. All Serbian political parties are opposed to Kosovo's independence, with the single exception of the Liberal Democratic Party. Counter-secession remains a top priority for the Serbian government, even though it avoids confrontation with countries that have established diplomatic relations with Kosovo. Although the EU has been very wary of linking the EU-mediated dialogue with the issue of recognition for Kosovo, the Serb government has repeatedly declared that it will never accept full diplomatic recognition as the price of EU membership. Such declaratory policies are preventing any nationalist Serb opposition party from benefiting from the political price Belgrade is paying to remain on track for EU membership, and this attitude has led to severe crises and setbacks in the EU's attempt to normalize its relations with Kosovo.

It may be concluded that neither the lack of any prospect of resolving by force a conflict that involves a contested state nor complete deadlock in negotiations would allow the parties to such a conflict to reorient their foreign policy towards objectives that are easier to reach than reunification or international recognition, respectively. For a government confronting breakaway, this would challenge its domestic legitimacy and, thus, would generate the risk of higher costs than those resulting from a standstill in its efforts to achieve reunification.

The international political agenda

The relationship between forgetfulness and the failure to attend to one's responsibilities with due care is a traditional theme in the analysis of the process of forgetting: the closing pages of Plato's *Republic* describe in metaphorical language how the river of carelessness (Ameles) runs through the desert plain of forgetfulness (Lethe).³⁹ In the previous section we saw the fateful consequences forgetfulness may have at the domestic level if a conflict on secession is neglected. But what are the consequences of forgetfulness and neglect, respectively, by international actors—including states, international organizations and non-state actors such as international media?

Counter-secession policies aim to garner active support for a policy of non-recognition, as reflected for example in the inclusion of explicit references to the principle of territorial integrity in bilateral and multilateral agreements.⁴⁰ By contrast, secessionist and irredentist parties will look for support for their positions on the basis of the principle of national self-determination. The conflicting parties need to prevent the mediation process from going against their basic interests. External actors, for their part, may have serious concerns about the consequences of a particular conflict involving a contested state for the international order, or they may have geopolitical interests at stake in its outcome, leading them to become active in efforts to resolve it. The efforts made by the parties to a conflict to mobilize support, or those by external actors to influence its outcome, will affect the setting, but will not reconcile the differences between the positions of the parties directly involved in a secessionist or irredentist conflict on the one hand and those of their allies and other external actors on the other. The stakes are not the same. Conflicting parties and external actors will not frame the questions of survival, territorial integrity or national identity in the same way. Generally speaking, efforts by external actors in support of one of the parties, or in mediation between the sides, are not enthusiastic. They may even not go beyond purely declaratory policies. A conflict may, for instance, be put on the agenda of bilateral or multilateral meetings, then to be mentioned only in passing.⁴¹

There are exceptions, however. First, the policies of actors—including patron states—that are involved in a secessionist conflict may be driven by irredentist motives. Some nationalist parties in Turkey and in Northern Cyprus are united in defending the interests of their common 'motherland',⁴² and these motives are also decisive for Russia's policies towards the Crimea. In situations like these, the attention conflicts receive differs from one case to another. The 'accession' of Crimea to the Russian Federation rates high in Russian public opinion—according to an opinion poll taken in early 2017, the Russian public even viewed it as the second most important historical event after the victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War.⁴³ The attention of

public opinion in Armenia similarly remains focused on the question of Nagorno-Karabakh. The Cyprus question, by contrast, rarely makes headline news in the Turkish media these days.⁴⁴ Second, governments may themselves be confronting secessionist movements, and may therefore be convinced that the outcome of a conflict on sovereignty elsewhere will be decisive for their own fate. Cyprus, for instance, has repeatedly declared that it will never recognize Kosovo, even supposing Serbia were ready to do so.⁴⁵

Conflicting parties that feel marginalized always have the option of ‘disruptive behaviour’⁴⁶ as a means of attracting political attention, in the hope that this will force external actors to intervene in their favour. This was the option chosen by Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili during the escalation of the conflict with Russia over Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the run-up to the 2008 war. Until then, the conflict on Abkhazia had been forgotten, in the sense that it did not have a prominent place on the security agenda of the main international actors present in the region. Russia was more engaged in the conflict than other powers, however, owing to the risk of a regional spillover across its borders, and other consequences for its national security. During the Georgian–Abkhaz war of 1992–1993 it had deployed peacekeeping forces on Abkhaz territory, which had since been monitored by UN observers. However, Russia’s involvement depended on its broader security interests, such as its policies towards the Atlantic Alliance. Western governments did give continuous support to the UN’s mediation between Georgia and Abkhazia, but without the kind of resolute efforts that would have been needed to make real progress in resolving the dispute. Unlike Moscow,⁴⁷ no Western capital had any members of government directly involved in the mediation efforts. This lack of commitment was concealed by ritualistic references to the conflict at bilateral or multilateral meetings on international security issues.

This approach changed dramatically in the run-up to the 2008 Georgian–Russian war. The Georgian president, Mikheil Saakashvili, adopted a confrontational policy. He ignored Western calls for restraint, hoping that the crisis resulting from a confrontation with Russia would increase the geopolitical significance of these two conflicts, mobilize Georgia’s allies and change the balance of power with Russia. Those Western governments that were opposed to Georgia’s full integration into NATO were accused of neglecting their political responsibilities.⁴⁸ Saakashvili managed to put the restoration of Georgia’s territorial integrity at the top of the international security agenda by linking it to NATO’s enlargement policies. When it came to Georgia’s membership of the Atlantic Alliance, he was ready to cross a red line set by Moscow.

The growing risk of open war between Georgia and the breakaway territories—a war involving Russia—prompted the European Union to step up its mediation efforts. Paris and Berlin sent their foreign affairs ministers, Bernard Kouchner and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, to the region. Javier Solana, the European Union’s High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, also engaged in talks with the Georgian and Abkhaz leaders.

Georgia lost the war against Russia. By recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia succeeded in keeping its troops in these territories without having to negotiate any peacekeeping mandate with other countries, notably Georgia itself. As a consequence, the conflicts in Georgia slipped down Russia’s diplomatic agenda. The EU also

had an interest in downgrading their importance. A secessionist conflict in a country that was peripheral to European interests should not dominate its security agenda, as it had in 2008. But nor should it be forgotten completely. The EU addresses the consequences of the non-resolution of the conflict on Abkhazia and South Ossetia by remaining active as a co-chair of the Geneva negotiation process on the conflicts in Georgia. It also deploys monitors along the boundaries with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and has a special representative covering all conflicts in the South Caucasus.

Conflicts can only be brought onto the EU agenda if it can be successfully argued that the European level of decision making is relevant to them.⁴⁹ Some conflicts fit more easily into such a framing process than others, and will consequently receive more attention: this is the case, for instance, with Cyprus—an EU member, and Kosovo—a potential candidate for EU membership. EU leaders were keen to demonstrate continuous support for the Cyprus negotiations in 2016–2017, despite the lack of international media attention on this conflict. The mediation between Serbia and Kosovo was one of the top priorities of Catherine Ashton, during her mandate as the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy from 2009 to 2014, and the same now goes for her successor, Federica Mogherini. In February 2018 the European Commission published a merit-based strategy for EU membership for Serbia and other Balkan states, which aimed at increasing the pressure for reform and—in the case of Serbia and Kosovo—for further normalization efforts.⁵⁰

The restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, too, is an issue that could easily be put onto the security agenda of the EU and NATO, as they both have an interest in ending Russia's destabilizing role at Ukraine's borders, and they also have the capacity to act. And indeed, sanctions have been implemented. But this does not mean that the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity is a priority objective for them, or that they assume that the Ukraine may recover Crimea in the foreseeable future. The US, meanwhile, has delegated the negotiations with Russia on Ukraine to the EU.⁵¹ A four-page document entitled 'Issues Paper on Relations with Russia', produced by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini in January 2015, listed the EU's core interests with regard to its cooperation with Russia. It referred to the breakaway territories in the former Soviet Union only in general terms, and expressed the need to secure from Russia 'a more constructive role with regards to protracted conflicts' in Eastern Partnership countries.⁵² The focus of these policies is thus on Russia's general policies towards its neighbours, not specifically on Ukraine. Within this framework, Western governments formulate policy objectives that can be linked to measurable progress, such as the stabilization of the eastern territories and their reintegration into Ukraine. These objectives find expression in the sanctions policies of the EU and the US towards Russia, which ensure that the conflict in Ukraine remains on the security agenda, as the procedures entail the need for continuous reappraisal.⁵³

Governments involved in mediation may end up being criticized for taking too close an interest in a particular conflict. This happened to the German authorities when they put serious effort into addressing the Transnistrian question. On 5 June 2010, in Meseberg, German Chancellor Merkel and Russian President Medvedev signed a memorandum in which they agreed that the EU and Russia would explore the possibility of setting up a common political and security committee. This structure would 'establish ground rules for joint EU–Russia civil/military crisis management operations'. The EU

and Russia would ‘cooperate in particular towards a resolution of the Transnistria conflict’.⁵⁴ The German side engaged the EU, without consulting its other members, in an attempt to resolve this conflict in exchange for the creation of a bilateral security committee. But the initiative failed to deliver a new security dialogue in Europe. One reason was that such a committee was not to the liking of some EU member states; also, Russia seemed either unable or unwilling to take resolute steps towards a settlement on the question of Transnistria. On the other side, this failed attempt resulted in increased German interest in resolving this conflict, which Berlin perceived as the most resolvable of all the ‘frozen conflicts’ in the EU’s eastern neighbourhood. This consequently put Transnistria higher up on the agenda for negotiations with Russia.⁵⁵ Moldova benefited from the German attention. A number of political observers, however, questioned the need for Berlin to take a leadership role on this issue. The German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on Chancellor Angela Merkel’s state visit to Moldova in August 2012 under the headline ‘Es geht ein Flug nach Nirgendwo’ (‘A Flight Leaves for Nowhere-Land’). It wondered how the ‘most powerful woman in the world’ (a reference to a ranking given by *Forbes Magazine*) could spend a whole day in a country that had no political significance whatsoever at a time when there were so many substantial issues requiring her full attention—such as the negotiations with the Greek government on debt relief.⁵⁶ This editorial evoked the chancellor’s political responsibilities and appealed to her to pay less attention to Moldova and its problems.

Particularly problematic in terms of carelessness is the way in which the international community handles the question of Nagorno-Karabakh. None of the conflicting parties has a reasonable chance of resolving the issue using military means. Nor have the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) mediators of the Minsk group (Russia, the US and France) any prospect of achieving a settlement on the status question. They have resigned themselves to addressing the constant breaches of the ceasefire and trying to contain the risk of violent escalation. The conflict remains overshadowed by higher-order concerns on the international security agenda, such as the Syrian civil war.⁵⁷ This situation does not rule out miscalculation or a deliberate attempt by the conflicting parties to achieve limited gains. Disruptive behaviour is a conscious strategy by both sides for attracting international attention, as is testified by ceasefire violations timed to take place just before or during negotiations. Military operations in April 2016 left more than 200 people dead on both sides. One of the likely reasons for these events is that Baku wanted to reprioritize the conflict on the international agenda, without necessarily expecting to achieve a decisive military victory. This raises the question of how to avoid carelessness. Laurence Broers warns that military escalation by default is a real risk.⁵⁸ The international mediators of the Minsk Group have to overcome what Thomas de Waal describes as their ‘Karabakh fatigue’⁵⁹ and persuade the conflicting parties of the need to agree to common security guarantees. Russia is showing more interest in the conflict than its partners: it is the only member of the group to have its foreign minister taking diplomatic initiatives in person.⁶⁰ It may therefore be concluded that the other members of the international community do not attach the same importance to this conflict—forgetting and non-forgetting being a question of degree, and this lack of a common international position on managing it may very well be regarded as carelessness.

It may be concluded that international actors play a crucial role in resolving conflicts on secession: they may engage in mediating activities and—either alternatively or

simultaneously—may strengthen the position of one party at the expense of the other. But even those external actors who are ready to lend active support to one side will still, in most cases, demonstrate a high degree of indifference towards the core values at stake, such as the affirmation of a national identity and sovereignty. These conflicts therefore tend to be downgraded on the international security agenda, and this translates into an acceptance of the status quo. Such an attitude on the part of the external actors may lead to severe tensions with the parties to the conflict, especially if the latter engage in disruptive behaviour. Case studies show that the main international actors involved in European security are aware of such potential consequences and therefore avoid total neglect—but in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh their inability to reach a common position amounts to a lack of due care.

The research agenda

The international community's knowledge about conflicts involving contested states has increased over the years, but remains uneven. In some cases, there is also a loss of knowledge. This may be demonstrated by a global overview, involving various forms of knowledge, which ranges from academic studies to observer reports.

The academic interest in the various conflicts involving contested states in Europe fluctuates—the conflict over Kosovo attracting the most attention and South Ossetia the least. Regarding political science, most interest by far has been aroused by the geopolitical dimension of these conflicts, in particular the political responsibilities of external actors in the breakup of states. In recent years the domestic policies of contested states has also attracted attention.⁶¹ In addition, there is ongoing interest in how to transform these conflicts—a research interest that is prominent in the analysis and policy recommendations to be found in reports by NGOs and think tanks. These bodies inform an international public about the claims of the conflicting parties—thereby fulfilling a role that is particularly important in a context where the leaderships of contested states are excluded from traditional diplomatic channels.

The reports of international organizations present in the conflict regions are a further source of knowledge about these conflicts. The UN and/or the OSCE have missions in all the areas in Europe where conflicts involve contested states⁶²—with the exception of South Ossetia and Abkhazia since 2009. The biggest OSCE monitoring mission is deployed in Ukraine, where it has been present since 2014. The OSCE was unable to give early warning about the crisis in Crimea, or to respond to it quickly. By contrast, it did provide ample information on the emerging conflict in eastern Ukraine, but as it was not empowered by the conflicting parties it was unable to make full use of this knowledge in order to contain the escalation of the conflict.⁶³ The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) combines the roles of facilitator and observer: it has verified ceasefire agreements and the withdrawal of heavy weapons, as decided in the Minsk Agreements, but it has also facilitated new ones, including on the local level, which then also needed to be monitored. It uses new surveillance technology, such as unmanned and unarmed aerial vehicles (UAVs).⁶⁴ Through its observer activities the SMM contributes to better communication between the sides and OSCE members. This has been helpful in de-escalating the conflict in the eastern regions. Finally, it also monitors the hardship inflicted on the population by the fighting, and maintains contact with the humanitarian

actors. Through all these activities, the OSCE mission in Ukraine is a crucial source of knowledge for the international media and international decision makers.

Its mandate to monitor the ceasefire line around Nagorno-Karabakh does not allow the OSCE to restrain violence or to inform the international community effectively about it. Its monitoring team serves mainly as a communication channel between the OSCE's Minsk Group and local commanders.⁶⁵ The lack of information about the potential of this conflict to lead to regional destabilization betrays an ignorance of possible consequences, and thus a lack of due care, on the part of the international community. After the fighting of April 2016, the two parties to the conflict agreed in principle that the number of OSCE observers would be increased. They were talking about doubling the number of personnel: from 6 to 12,⁶⁶ which remains—in comparison to the observer mandates for all other conflicts, in particular that in Ukraine—extremely small.

The EU has deployed its own missions in some conflict regions, such as the EU Border Assistance Mission which has monitored the boundaries of Transnistria since 2005, on both the Moldovan and Ukrainian sides. Since 2008 it has also deployed an observer mission—the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia—along the boundaries of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, this time on the Georgian side of the line. Both missions provide Brussels with detailed information on the situation at the borders with the contested states.

External actors rely on think tanks, research institutes and specialized advisory bodies. For instance, the European Commission for Democracy through Law—better known as the Venice Commission—gives advice to the Council of Europe or its members on constitutional and international legal matters, including those relating to the problems of divided nations. Some actors, such as the EU, have developed specialized analytical capacity within their diplomatic services.⁶⁷ The EU has moreover mandated an international fact-finding commission to clarify the political responsibility for the Georgian–Russian war of 2008.⁶⁸

The accumulation of various types of knowledge by the international community does not preclude forgetting. Some models for conflict resolution have lost their political relevance and are to a certain extent forgotten. One of these is research on federalism and confederalism. Reunification through federalization was considered acceptable by a number of governments confronting secession, for example in Cyprus and Georgia, and it was also strongly promoted by international organizations mediating in such conflicts, such as the UN and the OSCE. Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria, by contrast, have at times defended a two-state solution, through the creation of a confederation with Georgia or Moldova, respectively. The interest in federal and confederal models waned, however, with the combination of the failure of the UN's Annan plan for Cyprus in 2004, the recognition of Kosovo by a majority of EU members in 2008, and Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia the same year. The crises of federal arrangements in Belgium, Spain and the United Kingdom have also to be mentioned in this context. Federal mechanisms remained key in the UN negotiations on the reunification of Cyprus in 2016–2017, but not in the discourse of international organizations mediating in other secessionist conflicts. Where the EU is concerned, its officials ceased to refer explicitly to federalism as a model for conflict resolution in Georgia, owing to the lack of any prospect that it might actually be

adopted, preferring instead to defend abstract legal principles such as territorial integrity.

It may be concluded that knowledge about conflicts involving contested states has increased enormously over the last two decades, and external actors now have a better assessment of the consequences of stalemate in negotiations. This has come about despite the uneven interest of the international research community in particular conflicts, and the loss of knowledge in certain fields of conflict resolution.

Conclusions

A distinction has been drawn between three types of forgetting and non-forgetting. Each refers to a gradual process, where either forgetting or non-forgetting is dominant. The first type is when the conflicting parties choose to turn their backs on the conflict. Non-forgetting refers to the rejection of this option. Contested states are not capable of forgetting the conflict they are involved in, even if there is no prospect of its being resolved in the foreseeable future: doing so would undermine their claim to independence. States confronting secession, for their part, avoid this option too, even if the loss of territory would not affect their sovereign statehood. For them, choosing to forget might mean the loss of domestic legitimacy, as happened to Shevardnadze's government in 2003. Even when the public opinion of a state confronting secession relegates this issue to the background, as the Moldovan population has done with regard to Transnistria, moving on from the conflict is not an option.

The second type of forgetting refers to the marginalization of such conflicts on the international security agenda, or even their omission. Forgetting on the part of the external parties stems largely from their indifference to the identity dimension of the conflict, despite the particular geopolitical interests they may have in its outcome. Forgetting, indifference and neglect affect all conflicts, but to different degrees.

As for the third type, in recent decades there has been a vast accumulation of knowledge about conflicts involving contested states. The academic community, think tanks, NGOs, states and international organizations have all been involved. An effort is made to acquire a good analysis of the issues at stake in these disputes, their historical and political context, the involvement of external actors, the risk that a deadlock in negotiations may lead to a resumption of violent conflict, and the military situation on the ground. But such efforts are spread unevenly across the various conflicts, and there are losses of knowledge as well.

The various types of forgetting and non-forgetting do not necessarily proceed in parallel, but they are interrelated. The contradiction between an inability to forget, on the part of the conflicting parties, and the process of forgetting (as reflected in the marginalization of the conflict, up to the point of neglect) by the external actors, entails considerable risks for European security. This was the case with the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, and it may yet become the case with the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. The international actors themselves need to be aware of the risks involved in such a process of forgetting when their lack of attention coincides with the conflicting parties' inability to forget. They may opt for increasing their knowledge about these conflicts in all their aspects, ranging from the military situation of the contested states to their domestic politics. But the fact that external actors become more knowledgeable about

these conflicts does not mean that they mobilize the resources necessary to act upon this knowledge. On the contrary, it may mean that they simply want to be aware of the consequences of their inability to resolve the conflicts. There is real neglect—even lack of due care—when insufficient efforts are made to gather information or knowledge about the potential for violent escalation in situations of deadlock. This is particularly the case with Nagorno-Karabakh.

Notes

1. See Rebecca Bryant and Yiannis Papadakis (eds), *Cyprus and the Politics of Memory: History, Community and Conflict*, I. B. Tauris, London, 2012, p. 21. See also Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 14–15; and Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 2000, pp. 585–587.
2. Quoted in Jasper van der Steen, *Memory Wars in the Low Countries, 1566–1700*, Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2015, p. 53.
3. The Treaty of Münster between the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of France and their respective allies stated ‘that there shall be on the one side and the other a perpetual Oblivion, Amnesty, or Pardon of all that has been committed since the beginning of these Troubles’, ‘Treaty of Westphalia: Peace Treaty between the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of France and their respective Allies (1648)’, on the website of the Avalon Project, Yale University <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/westphal.asp> (accessed 8 July 2017). The Treaty of Osnabrück between the Holy Roman Empire and Sweden and their respective allies, which was also signed in 1648, contained a similar clause. The formulation to be found in the Peace of Münster, where the Kingdom of Spain recognized the Dutch Republic as independent, did not go as far as the two previous treaties regarding the prescription of forgetfulness: ‘The subjects and residents of the lands of the aforesaid Lords King and States shall maintain all good understanding and friendship with each other, without consideration of the offenses and hurt which they have suffered before this.’ *The Treaty of Münster, 1648*. The English translation is to be found in Herbert H. Rowen, ed., *The Low Countries in Early Modern Times: A Documentary History*, Walker, New York, 1972, pp. 179–187 <<http://www1.umassd.edu/euro/resources/dutchrep/14.pdf>> (accessed 27 February 2018).
4. The ancient practices of forgetting are still relevant in more recent times, as for instance in post-Franco Spain and in Lebanon after the civil war. See Omar Guillermo Encarnación, *Democracy without Justice in Spain: The Politics of Forgetting*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2014; and Craig Larkin, *Memory and Conflicts in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the Past*, Routledge, London, 2012.
5. It must be borne in mind that secessionist conflicts leading to the creation of breakaway entities may be driven by irredentist motives.
6. Kosovo is the only contested state where such an approach has been implemented: see Gëzim Visoka, ‘Arrested truth: transitional justice and the politics of remembrance in Kosovo’, *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 8, 2016, pp. 62–80.
7. An analysis of the expression ‘Forget it!’ is to be found in Harald Weinrich, *Lethe: Kunst und Kritik des Vergessens*, Verlag C. H. Beck, München, 2005, p. 14.
8. For reflections on the present state of research on memory see Anne Whitehead, *Memory*, Routledge, London, 2009; K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011; and Siobhan Kattago (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Memory Studies*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2015.
9. See for instance Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Giorgio Comai and Ann Tsurtsumia-Zurabishvili, ‘The secret lives of unrecognized states: internal dynamics, external relations, and counter-

- recognition strategies', *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27(3), 2016, pp. 440–486. According to the authors, unrecognized states were viewed at first as transient phenomena or as the puppets of external powers. These two reasons, they say, combined with the difficulty of gaining access to these territories, largely explain the fact that unrecognized states were originally neglected by the academic community and the public at large (pp. 440–441). As demonstrated in the present article, the fact that the public at large (or the media) neglect breakaway territories does not rule out academic interest.
10. Paul Connerton, 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studies*, 1(1), 2008, pp. 59–71. 'Prescriptive forgetting' (referred to above), where the parties to a conflict are forbidden to remember the injustices they have suffered, is one of the types of forgetting mentioned in this article. The other six are not immediately relevant to the present analysis.
 11. Terms such as 'memory', 'commemoration' or 'remembering' likewise indicate an active transformation of the past. They are also crucial for an analysis of identity building and political choices in agenda-setting. But they will not be used in this article, as their significance and relevance for historical analysis is best addressed separately.
 12. Sebastiaan Princen, 'Agenda-setting in the European Union: a theoretical exploration and agenda for research', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14(1), 2007, pp. 28–29.
 13. Irredentist conflicts, by contrast, have their origin in an attempt by an outside actor to retrieve 'an ethnically kindred people and their territory across an international boundary, joining them and it to the retrieving state'. See Donald Horowitz, 'Self-determination: politics, philosophy, and law', in Margaret Moore (ed.), *National Self-Determination and Secession*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 183. But irredentist conflicts are likewise to be analysed on the domestic level. For a literature study on domestic factors driving irredentist politics see Thomas Ambrosio, *Irredentism: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics*, Praeger, Westport, CT and London, 2001, pp. 3–6.
 14. Scott Pegg, *International Society and the De Facto State*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1998.
 15. It is with respect to his second characteristic that my definition of a contested state differs from the definitions of this term to be found in Deon Geldenhuys, *Contested States in World Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009; or in Dimitris Papadimitriou and Petar Petrov, 'Whose rule, whose law? Contested statehood, external leverage and the European Union's Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 50 (5), pp. 746–763.
 16. Annexed and other kinds of disputed territories in Europe, such as Crimea and Gibraltar, are excluded from this list as they do not involve contested states. But the irredentist conflicts over the status of the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh, Donetsk and Lugansk are included, as they have led to the creation of such contested states. Generally speaking, where unification/annexation is not seen as a realistic objective in the foreseeable future, irredentist conflicts may lead to the creation of contested states.
 17. On Kosovo see James Crawford, 'Kosovo and the criteria for statehood in international law', in Marko Milanovic and Michael Wood (eds), *The Law and Politics of the Kosovo Advisory Opinion*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2015, pp. 280–290. See also Papadimitriou and Petrov, *op. cit.*, pp. 748–749; Vjosa Musliu and Jan Orbie, 'The international missions in Kosovo. What is in a name?', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 19(3), 2014, pp. 411–428. On the question of the constitutional independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia see International Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG), *Report*, Vol. II, September 2009, pp. 131–134 <http://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/IIFFMCG_Volume_III.pdf> (accessed 24 July 2017).
 18. This article does not deal with contested states in Europe that have been either destroyed by military force (the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in Russia and the Republic of Serbian Krajina in Croatia) or forcibly reincorporated into the state it has broken away from (the Republika Srpska in Bosnia-Herzegovina). In these cases the concept of forgetting takes on a different meaning from that in conflicts characterized by negotiation deadlock, and should consequently be dealt with separately.

19. A list of countries that have recognized Kosovo is to be found on the website *Thank you Kosovo* <<http://www.kosovothanksyou.com>> (accessed 24 July 2017).
20. On Kosovo's policies of recognition see Edward Newman and Gëzim Visoka, 'The foreign policy of state recognition: Kosovo's diplomatic strategy to join international society', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2 May 2016 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orw042>> (accessed 24 July 2017). See also James Ker-Lindsay, *The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012.
21. According to Abkhaz officials interviewed (Sukhum(i), April and November–December 2014), the performance of the Abkhaz Ministry of Foreign Affairs is largely assessed on this basis. Abkhazia has obtained recognition from Russia, and—with Russia's support—from Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru and Syria.
22. 'Our regional foreign policy is based on peace, stability and security. Our commitment to dialogue with Serbia, despite the past, is the best proof of this dedication. However, this process should not continue eternally and the agreements shall be implemented', stated Kosovo's Minister for Foreign Affairs Enver Hoxhaj in July 2016: 'Hoxhaj in Paris Summit: EU shall be more than ever decisive to the Future of the Balkans', Kosovo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 July 2016 <<http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,217,3564>> (accessed 24 July 2017).
23. Interviews with Abkhaz officials, Sukhum/i, April and November–December 2014.
24. See Sir Hersch Lauterpacht, *Recognition in International Law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 47.
25. On the Rose Revolution see Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold (eds), *Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2005; and Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2005.
26. See the various contributions to Louise Shelley, Erik R. Scott and Anthony Latta (eds), *Organised Crime and Corruption in Georgia*, Routledge, London and New York, 2007.
27. Russia has demanded that Georgia sign bilateral interstate agreements on the non-use of force with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These agreements would have to be ratified by the United Nations. See Vladimir Socor, 'Lavrov elaborates on non-use-of-force proposals in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 8(82), 27 April 2011 <<https://jamestown.org/program/lavrov-elaborates-on-non-use-of-force-proposals-in-sukhumi-and-tskhinvali/>> (accessed 24 July 2017).
28. Some Georgian politicians would admit—in private or after leaving public office—that they have no hope of Abkhazia's being reincorporated into Georgia. Eduard Shevardnadze himself declared in June 2011 that the recognition of Abkhazia would be a sensible option, particularly with a view to facilitating the return of the Georgian refugees. See 'Shevardnadze supports recognition of Abkhazia', *The Voice of Russia*, 29 June 2011 <<https://sputniknews.com/voiceofrussia/2011/06/29/52570203.html>> (accessed 25 July 2017).
29. See Institutul de Politice Publice, Barometer of Public Opinion, November 2015, p. 22. See this and other opinion polls (2000–2015) on the internet on <<http://ipp.md/old/lib.php?l=en&idc=156>> (accessed 13 August 2018).
30. There is no majority in favour of recognizing Transnistria's independence or even granting it autonomy. See International Republican Institute, Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova, September 29–21 October 2015, p. 28 <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/2015-11-09_survey_of_moldovan_public_opinion_september_29-october_21_2015.pdf> (accessed 24 July 2017).
31. Constitution of Ukraine, Article 2 <<http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/constitutions/country/52>> (accessed 24 July 2017). See also Petro Poroshenko, 'President's Address on the Occasion of the Second Anniversary of Resistance to Russian Occupation of Crimea', 26 February 2016, Official Website of the President of Ukraine <<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/zvernennya-prezidenta-shodo-drugoyi-richnici-pochatku-sproti-36799>> (accessed 24 July 2017).

32. As quoted from an interview with Ms Yulia Mostovaya, the editor of the Ukrainian weekly *Zerkalo Nedeli*, in 'Ukraine's leaders may be giving up on reuniting the country', *The Economist*, 11 February 2017.
33. See Laurence Broers, 'The Nagorny Karabakh conflict defaulting to war', Russia and Eurasia Programme, Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, July 2016 <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/nagorny-karabakh-conflict-defaulting-war#sthash.T4g1yrHM.dpuf>> (accessed 24 July 2017).
34. International Crisis Group, 'Divided Cyprus: coming to terms with an imperfect reality', Europe Report No. 229, 14 March 2014 <<https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/cyprus/divided-cyprus-coming-terms-imperfect-reality>> (accessed 24 July 2017).
35. *Ibid.*, p. iii.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29 and 34–36.
37. See the PhD dissertation of Vincent Laborderie, 'La reconnaissance du Kosovo par les États européens', Université Catholique de Louvain, 2017.
38. See Conference on accession to the European Union—Serbia, 'Accession document: Subject: European Union common position, Chapter 35: Other issues: Item 1: Normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo*', Brussels, 30 November 2015 <<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/AD-12-2015-INIT/en/pdf>> (accessed 24 July 2017).
39. *The Republic* by Plato, translated by Allan Bloom, 2nd ed., Basic Books, New York, 1991, p. 483.
40. See, for instance, the commitment to the territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders in Article 9 of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Georgia, in *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 261, Vol. 57, 30 August 2014 <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L:2014:261:FULL&from=EN>> (accessed 24 July 2017).
41. Interview with a US diplomat, in Tbilisi in May 2002, about the 28 May 2002 meeting in St Petersburg between George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin.
42. Interview with a Turkish Cypriot official in Nicosia, June 2017.
43. According to a public opinion poll by the Levada Center: 'Prisoyedineniye Kryma stalo odnim iz glavnykh povodov dlya gordosti rossiyan', Interfaks, 1 March 2017 <<http://www.interfax.ru/russia/551815>> (accessed 1 March 2018).
44. International Crisis Group, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
45. Ker-Lindsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 121. See also Laborderie, *op. cit.*
46. On this concept see Steven G. Livingston, 'The politics of international agenda-setting: Reagan and north-south relations', *International Studies Quarterly*, 36(3), 1992, p. 314.
47. Russia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Yevgeny Primakov organized status negotiations between Abkhazia and Georgia in 1997.
48. See Saakashvili's description of NATO's reluctance to accept the membership of Ukraine and Georgia as appeasement, in Stephen Fidler and Stefan Wagstyl, 'Georgian leader warns against NATO veto', *Financial Times*, 31 March 2008. See also the interview transcript in the *Financial Times*, 30 March 2008. Ron Asmus and Mark Leonard were warning in June 2008 that the West could be sleepwalking into a war on the European continent if it continued to refuse to engage in Georgia's internal and external conflicts: 'Get involved over Georgia or invite a war', *Financial Times*, 3 June 2008. On Western carelessness see also Stephen Blank, 'From neglect to duress: the West and the Georgian crisis before the 2008 war', in Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr (eds), *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, M. E. Sharpe, Armonk and London, 2009, pp. 104–121.
49. Princen, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
50. European Commission, 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans', COM(2018) 65 final, 6 February 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf> (accessed 3 March 2018).

51. Charles Kupchan, 'Donald Trump's EU visit offers chance to resolve Ukraine conflict', *Financial Times*, 23 May 2017.
52. The full text of the document entitled 'Issues paper on relations with Russia' is to be found on <<http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/files/2015/01/Russia.pdf>> (accessed 24 July 2017).
53. The EU's sanctions policies force its members to reassess the situation every six months, and the easing or lifting of US sanctions requires a complex review process involving Congress. On Western sanctions policies see Sabine Fischer, 'Sanktionen als Dauerzustand? Vorschlag für eine Flexibilisierung der EU-Sanktionspolitik gegenüber Russland', SWP-Aktuell 2017/A 24, April 2017 <https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/aktuell/2017A24_fhs.pdf> (accessed 25 May 2017) and Hrant Kostanyan (ed.), *Assessing European Neighbourhood Policy: Perspectives from the Literature*, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and Rowman and Littlefield, Brussels and London, 2017, pp. 124–125.
54. The Meseberg Memorandum is to be found on <<https://russiaeu.ru/sites/default/files/user/files/2010-06-05-meseberg-memorandum.pdf>> (accessed 1 March 2018).
55. Philip Remler, 'Negotiation gone bad: Russia, Germany, and crossed communications', Carnegie Europe, 21 August 2013 <<http://carnegieeurope.eu/2013/08/21/negotiation-gone-bad-russia-germany-and-crossed-communications-pub-52712>> (accessed 1 March 2018). See also William H. Hill, 'The Moldova-Transdnistria dilemma: local politics and conflict resolution', Carnegie Moscow Center, 24 January 2018 <<http://carnegie.ru/commentary/75329>> (accessed 3 March 2018).
56. 'Es geht ein Flug nach Nirgendwo', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23 August 2012.
57. See Broers, 'The Nagorny Karabakh Conflict', op. cit., p. 10.
58. Ibid., p. 2.
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Notes on contributor

Bruno Coppieters is the Head of the Department of Political Science at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. His published works deal mainly with federalism, the ethics of war and secession, and conflicts on sovereignty in the Caucasus and the Balkans.