Governing border conflicts: when can the European Union be an effective mediator?

Michelle Pace
University of Birmingham
Department of Political Science and International Studies
m.pace@bham.ac.uk

Abstract

There are several views regarding the European Union’s role in border conflicts. Underlying these perspectives is the belief that the EU, through membership or association, helps to transform the nature of border conflicts from lines of conflict to lines of co-operation. Some analysts highlight the EU’s discursive framework that offers political leaders opportunities for legitimising policies aimed at diminishing conflicts. Others argue that as an economic giant but a political dwarf, any influence the EU as a regional organization may have is limited to financial aid and trade programmes. Those endorsing this view would argue that the EU, in fact, does not have a policy on border conflicts per se. Alternative arguments hold that the EU’s impact on border conflicts pertains to change in people’s identity scripts. Applying the model of EU paths in border conflict transformation developed by Albert, Diez and Stetter (2004), this paper attempts an investigation of the EU perspective on border conflicts. This includes an analysis of the conceptualisations of five conflict cases among core actors in EU institutions, namely the Commission, the Council, the European Parliament (EP) and Member States Representative offices. The border conflicts involved are Cyprus, Russia and the Baltic States (Europe’s North), Northern Ireland (NI), Turkey/Greece and Israel/Palestine. This paper thus seeks to map out patterns in the strategies employed by the EU in its various influences on conflicting parties. In bringing together an actor, structure and process-driven analyses this paper hopes to take the debate on the EU’s impact on border conflicts a step further and to offer some reflections on the EU’s role as a mediator in the transformation of border disputes.
1. Introduction: Setting out the problem

Debates about the EU and its role in world politics have often highlighted the challenge of disturbances in its peripheral areas that could potentially become regional security threats (Bretherton and Vogler, 1999; Bull, 1982; Kohnstamm and Hager, 1973; Ehrhart, 2002; Hill, 1990; Piening, 1997; PMI, 1997; Smith, 2000; Tanner, 1999). This agenda presents EU policy makers with a range of concerns with the 2004 enlargement to the East and South: Israelis and Palestinians, Turkish and Greek Cypriots, to mention a few examples, have expressed their desire for defined and separate national territories. These border conflicts require a broad set of integrated EU policy strategies and instruments to meet these challenges. The EU – as a multilateral organisation – is often presumed to be in a good position to have an effective role in resolving such disputes.1 Creating the institutional infrastructure for border governance is a central policy task for the EU. This paper seeks to investigate the mechanisms through which border disputes and competing jurisdictional claims are addressed by the EU and whether and how the EU can lead to their transformation. There are several views regarding the European Union’s role in border conflicts. Underlying these perspectives is the belief that the EU, through membership or association, helps to transform the nature of border conflicts from lines of conflict to lines of co-operation. Some analysts highlight the EU’s discursive framework that offers political leaders opportunities for legitimising policies aimed at diminishing conflicts. Others argue that as an economic giant but a political dwarf, any influence the EU as a regional organization may have is limited to financial aid and trade programmes. Those endorsing this view would argue that the EU, in fact, does not have a policy on border conflicts per se. Alternative arguments hold that the EU’s impact on border conflicts pertains to change in people’s identity scripts. By applying the conceptual framework adopted in Albert, Diez and Stetter (2004),2 this

---

1 This paper is presented within the context of the research project “The European Union and Border Conflicts: The Impact of Integration and Association” (EUBorderConf), funded by a grant from the European Union’s Fifth Framework Programme (SERD-2002-00144), with additional funds from the British Academy, and co-ordinated at the Department of Political Science and International Studies (POLSIS), The University of Birmingham, UK.

Birmingham: The University of Birmingham
paper seeks to establish the conditions under which and the processes through which the EU as a regional organization can act as an effective mediator in border conflicts through the various EU paths of influence on conflicting parties. In their framework, the authors bring this debate to the fore and outline four pathways through which the EU can have an impact on border conflicts, both through integration within its territory as well as, through association agreements, beyond its borders. The first path relates to EU actors-driven, mainly direct, interventions, including membership negotiations, which are predominantly directed at the political leadership of the conflict parties (carrot and stick). Path two pertains to the EU’s institutional and discursive framework (especially through the *acquis communautaire*) that provides a reference point for the political leadership in border conflict cases to legitimise policies aiming at diminishing the conflict. Any potential desuritisation attempts by policy-makers are supported by the EU’s frame and discourse of ‘integration and peace’. The third path, often directed at the wider societal level (for example, peace-oriented Non-Governmental Organisations or NGOs), relates to direct EU support activities such as financial or organisational backing. This path is often designed to lead to path 4 where the EU’s impact is targeted at the creation of new discursive identity frameworks in which people in conflict areas express and construct their identities in new ways (change of identity-scripts).

This paper is divided as follows: a brief outline of the methodology employed in this research is first laid out. The next section comprises a comparative part based in the main on interviews conducted in Brussels as well as official EU documentation. Taking the paths of EU impact as guidance, it highlights similarities as well as differences in EU strategies across the five case studies, across the various EU actors and across time. Some expected as well as unexpected results emerge and a pattern of EU paths detected. Finally, by way of evaluation, the results obtained from empirical sources are contrasted with the academic literature and in turn shed light on any discrepancies. In concluding, the paper argues that there is no clear “end product” to the paths of EU impact on border conflicts. Such strategies imply a continuing process of EU action that evolves over time (in line with past experience in the EU involving peace-building through the deepening of functional, organizational and even social

---

3 The author is grateful to Thomas Diez, Stephan Stetter and Bahar Rumelili for their stimulating input, criticism and support in the preparation of this paper.
linkages). In view of the still-evolving institutions and procedures of EU policy, this should come as no surprise to analysts, particularly those interested in debates on the EU and border conflicts.

1.1 Methodology

In line with the conceptual framework adopted in Albert, Diez and Stetter (2004), the methodology selected in order to enquire about EU decision-making processes towards border conflicts (including conceptualisations of the five conflicts among core actors in EU institutions) aimed at investigating and establishing the conditions under which and the processes through which the EU as a regional organization can, through membership or association, help to transform the nature of border conflicts from lines of conflict to lines of co-operation.

Given that the EU does not have a specific policy on border conflicts’ transformation, my analysis uses evidence from existing published sources and original document research. Additionally I relied upon confidential interviews and informal conversations with approximately twenty officials involved with the five border conflict cases (Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Greece/Turkey, Israel/Palestinian and Europe’s North). These officials were interviewed during a trip to Brussels in January 2004. The following institutions were represented in this sample:

* The European Commission (officials from DGs External Relations/Enlargement/Regional Policy/Research/RELEX)
* The European Parliament
* The Council of the European Union (General Secretariat, Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit – DGE, Task Force Middle East and Unit of Javier Solana)
* Office of the Northern Ireland Executive
* UK permanent representation to the EU

I was also able to interview members of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee at the European Commission, as well as researchers at the Centre for European Policy

---

Studies (CEPS) and officials at the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD).

A balance was attempted in seeking the views of a fairly similar number of informants for each case. All of these officials were asked a consistent set of theoretically informed questions\(^5\) to provide supporting evidence for the analysis that follows.

2. **Comparative Section**

This section offers a comparative analyses on the way in which diverse EU actors conceptualise and work out the EU’s strategies on border conflict cases they are most familiar with through their everyday involvement. Differences as well as similarities emerge across actors, across cases and across time.

2.1 **General observations**

Before proceeding to the conceptualisations of the five conflicts, a note on the definition of border conflicts as it is used in the conceptual framework adopted in this paper is called for. The need for such a clarification arises from questions raised during the aforementioned interviews held with actors related, in particular, to the case of Europe’s North.

As in commonly held views in public debates, informants in Brussels, in general, associate conflicts with violence. Within the context of the conceptual framework adopted by Albert, Diez and Stetter (2004), such a reading may be related to one of the four stages in the process model of social conflicts.\(^6\) This is the final stage which reflects conflicts of subordination and where ‘systematic physical force becomes an acceptable means of dealing with and ‘convincing’ the other side’.\(^7\) However, in the context of the EUBorderConf project, border conflicts are understood in broad

---

\(^5\) See Appendix A on page 40-42.  
\(^6\) Albert, Diez and Stetter (2004) draw upon a process model of social conflicts adopted by Heinz Mesmer (2003). Albert et al distinguish between conflict episodes, issue conflicts, identity conflicts and conflicts of subordination. Different stages are characterised by different forms of subject incompatibilities and different ways in which incompatibilities are articulated.  
\(^7\) Albert, Diez, Stetter, 2004.
discursive terms where conflict is defined as ‘the incompatibility of subject positions’ as well as part of the (re-) production of subject positions and incorporates those conflicts where physical violence is absent. Therefore, ‘it is only when conflicts turn into conflicts of subordination, … that physical violence against the Other is seen as legitimate’. 8

This is an important discrepancy between everyday conceptions of conflict in Brussels and elsewhere and those adhered to by analysts.

Another important observation to note is that most Brussels informants embraced the view that the EU has no single, overarching policy centre in charge of the EU’s policies on border conflicts. Decision-making with regard to such issues as the Israel-Arab conflict, Cyprus, Greek-Turkish disputes, Northern Ireland and Kalingrad/Karelia are located in the intersection of governmental and supranational institutions and their dynamics. Moreover, informants repeatedly reiterated that the EU is not a single, unified actor and referred to the several institutions and multiple actors working at the EU level. This general finding follows similar arguments found in the literature in this field.

Bearing in mind these general conceptualisations on the EU and on interpretations of conflict in Brussels the next section presents the manner in which Brussels informants conceptualise constructions of the EU by conflict parties in each case.

2.2 How do conflict parties perceive the EU and its involvement in border conflicts?

The view from Brussels

Albert, Diez and Stetter (2004) argue that against the background of the EU’s institutional fragmentation, the perceptual diversity across the conflict parties shape the relations of conflict parties with the EU. It is therefore important to summarize here how conflict parties view the EU and its strategies towards the transformation of border conflicts as seen by Brussels actors. It may be argued that the manner in which

8 Ibid.
these conceptual characteristics relate to each other shape the way in which the EU can impact on a border conflict.\footnote{Just to clarify one point here. This discussion relates to how EU officials think their actions are being perceived by the conflict parties. The actual perceptions of conflict parties may be different.}

The general view from Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) is that in the cases of Cyprus and Turkey-Greece, the conflict parties do not trust the EU. In the Greek-Turkish case, a Commission informant insisted that the EU is perceived by the Turkish parties as having an imbalanced approach to its application for EU membership (which is delaying the start of accession negotiations for Turkey) when compared to the case of Cyprus.\footnote{This interpretation is being challenged in Turkey more recently.} In the personal view of the same informant, this perception is not only problematic for Turkey but even more so for Commission officials who have to deal with Turkish parties. This may go to explain why, during his latest visit to Ankara, Prodi repeatedly emphasised that the EU was not taking a different approach with Turkey’s membership case:

‘In October this year, my Commission will present its recommendation on whether Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria … Let me assure you that our recommendation will be based on an objective assessment. We will use the same criteria and methodology that so successfully has been used for all the other candidate countries … These criteria were not invented for Turkey, but apply equally to all candidates’. \footnote{Prodi, Romano, 2004. \textit{Speech of Romano Prodi, The President of the European Commission}, at the Turkish Grand National Assembly, Ankara, 14 January.}

Another perceived imbalance in Turkish eyes (according to the same official) stems from the Commission’s presence in the south of the island (through its Delegation) that is very limited in the north (and only symbolic).\footnote{Interview at the Commission, January 2004.} In the context of the Middle East conflict, there was a shared view across actors that the EU is perceived as biased, pro-Arab and sometimes anti-Semitic, particularly so by Israeli parties. Commission officials dealing with Russia on the Europe’s North case explained EU-Russian relations as difficult and always uncertain, especially for Russians and Lithuanian parties. In contrast, a positive perception of the EU is found at grassroot levels in Northern Ireland. One informant from the Commission who has been working on this
case for the past four years expressed the view of conflict parties on the ground about the EU’s involvement thus:

‘At the grassroot level, we have a high profile … on the ground. In the case of Northern Ireland, there have been ongoing local partnerships [supported by the EU] at times when political parties were not talking to each other. Through our funding, our financial incentives, dialogue continued and this has imprinted a positive view of the EU amongst the people on both sides … Almost everyone on each side knows about PEACE and you see EU flags everywhere … ’

Having highlighted some examples of the ways in which EU actors perceive conflict parties’ perspectives on the EU and its role in border conflicts, it is now appropriate to outline how Brussels actors themselves perceive the border conflicts in question in some detail.

2.3 Conceptualisations of conflicts

In general, most informants across the spectrum of cases referred to the conflict cases as ‘territorial or ethnic issues’ - with some exceptions. For example, the Council’s broad perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reflects its multi-dimensional strategies. As one informant claimed:

‘This conflict is the mother of all conflicts, so I cannot say that we perceive this conflict only as a territorial conflict. It is a conflict about water, land, religions, refugees, an ethnic conflict … all these dimensions are included in the Middle East conflict. Our approach is [therefore] quite comprehensive. We tackle all these issues at the same time’.13

This is a similar interpretation to that of another informant who works on Northern Ireland and who claimed that:

‘There are various ways of how we conceptualise the conflict … it’s a territorial issue, an ethnic issue, a religious one from previous centuries, a war of liberation, colonial context, criminality, rebellion, … but the EU did not and does not try to analyse it in this sense …’\textsuperscript{14}

But in general, the conflict in Northern Ireland like that between Greece and Turkey, is perceived as a bilateral issue between two states. Informants’ conceptualisation of the Cyprus conflict was interpreted in accordance with their reading of the history of this divided island:

‘It is a sordid conflict … and belongs to old Europe … with political life trapped in a scenario created in the 1950s and which has not moved much forward since …’\textsuperscript{15}

Similar characterisations of this conflict were observed across informants’ discourses where their speech acts referred to historical narratives. In conceptualising the Cyprus conflict one MEP described this as:

‘The civil war between Cypriots was a complicated one… there were ethnic and religious differences … people are frightened of unification … their memories are still fresh …their prejudices run deep. It will take a political process to acclimatise Cypriots to post-national Europe … some thirty years … this is similar to the Irish problem …’

While an informant at the Commission stated that:

‘It’s a political conflict … one which came about through various historical negotiations …’

As mentioned earlier, informants working on Europe’s North case insist that the cases of Kaliningrad and Karelia are not perceived as border conflicts in Brussels:

\textsuperscript{14} Interview at the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive, January 2004.  
\textsuperscript{15} Interview at the EP, January 2004.
'When we opened negotiations with the 10 candidates for the 2004 enlargement, the process of integration … enlargement was perceived by Moscow as a threat. Moscow was only concerned with questions on the status of Kaliningrad following enlargement: Moscow was afraid that Kaliningraders might try to gain autonomy'.

Similar to the literature on this case, this Commission informant agreed that enlargement was a catalyst in creating an ‘issue’ which would otherwise not have emerged.

But the overwhelming conflict conception, especially within the Commission, and as hinted above, was one centred on violence in civil society, that is violence between people. Informants argued that this may be the reason why the EU has, in the main, been ineffective in its strategies towards border conflicts since it is not designed to deal with violent, territorial or ethnic conflicts. What the EU is able to deal with, in their view, is social deprivation, disadvantaged areas and extreme political views (nationalism) through its main instrument: economic development. This finding goes well in line with the views of analysts who argue for the case of the EU as a civilian power (Çakir, 2004; Whitman, 1998).

This general conflict perception takes us back to the case of Europe’s North and sheds light on why this is not accounted for by the informants as a conflict. In contrast to previous accounts arguing that the EU’s impact can sometimes lead to the intensification of (existing) conflicts or to the creation of new ones, especially at the EU’s own external borders, citing the case of Europe’s North, informants in Brussels firstly discredit this latter case as a ‘border conflict’ case, and moreover, disagree with any such linkage.

---

16 Interview at RELEX, January 2004.
18 This refers to social conflict.
19 The image of the Community as a civilian power is not new in the literature. It was originally introduced by Duchêne, 1973. This was followed by Bull’s (1982) criticism and Hill’s questioning of whether the EC is a civilian or a political power.
There was therefore a clear discrepancy between, on the one hand, how informants perceive a conflict and how conflict is understood in the EUBorderConf project, and on the other hand, on the EU’s impact on the transformation of such a conflict, where in Brussels a positive impact marks the end of violence (narrow view of conflict), whereas within the EUBorderConf project, a successful EU impact marks changes in the positions of conflict parties (for example changes in how the ‘other’ is perceived, in effect a broader view of conflict).  

In terms of the EUBorderConf project conceptual framework, these informants’ perceptions of the Europe’s North case can be read in terms of the first stage in the process model of social conflicts, namely conflict episode. This stage relates to ‘isolated instances of the articulation of the incompatibility related to a particular issue’. The emergence of border conflicts in the Northwestern region, for example, the case of the Finnish-Russian border – the ‘Karelian question’ relates to the latent dispute regarding the restitution of territories ceded by Finland to the Soviet Union according to the Treaty of Paris in the aftermath of World War II. With the 2004 enlargement to include Lithuania and Poland, the enclave/exclave of Kaliningrad is also drawn into the EU’s borders. Informants argued that from the EU’s perspective its focus and interests lie in ensuring appropriate measures to prevent the infiltration of crime and illegal activities from the Russian enclave in order to be able to preserve the EU’s internal freedoms. This is in agreement with the literature on this case although here it is further argued that the aim is one of protecting the EU’s external security as well as developing EU-Russian relations.

It can then be argued that the perspective of integration and association in the framework of the 2004 enlargement process contained these ‘issues’ at an early stage from further intensification. This was made possible through the Facility Travel Document (FTD) agreement (as a visa regime) between the EU and its partners in the North (and marks a flexible arrangement on the part of the EU).

20 Some may argue that it is the nature of social science to offer alternative perspectives to those of policy makers on the ground and to present information in alternative ways other than it may appear to those directly involved.
22 See also Prozorov, 2003.
24 Given the discussion in Russia about the EU’s inimical motives, this may relate to an issue conflict or even an identity conflict in the process model of social conflicts (Albert et al, 2004).
2.4 Across Cases

As expected, there was a general agreement amongst informants that the EU holds a different approach towards conflict situations in countries that are members of the EU (as in the case of Northern Ireland and partly in the Greek-Turkish case with Greece being a full member). This is in line with path one outlined in the EUBorderConf conceptual framework which stipulates that the structural impact of this path is usually less powerful in cases of association (Israel/Palestine) than in cases where both conflict parties are EU members (and are thus directly subject to the _acquis communautaire_). In conflict cases where Member States are involved, informants agreed that, moreover, the EU tends to be more flexible in its strategy and more prepared to be innovative in the creation of new programmes, as in the case of PEACE I and II for Northern Ireland, to address such disputes:

‘It has to be a different approach!’ was a general comment on this issue.

‘The Northern Ireland case was closer to the EU than say the case of Israel and Palestine … of course there is a different EU approach if Member States are involved in a border conflict … both parties were in the EEC to start with …the way this conflict was conceptualised was in terms of one which needed the attention of the EEC to promote a united Europe and to overcome any consequences stemming from the Irish border’.

This observation marks the importance of the creation of the EEC/EU’s regional policy to prevent problems from disrupting the Community and to a certain extent, to ensure a single European voice in international affairs (Smith, 2004).

In general, most informants from different EU institutions made reference to the first path (and third) as the strategy repeatedly adopted in the EU’s relations with Cyprus and Turkey. Although one might expect different opinions on how many carrots and
how many sticks are most strategically used, informants agreed that in general, the EU is best at carrots.\textsuperscript{25}

In the case of Cyprus, the Council through the membership carrot and the Commission through the provision of incentives to conflict parties adopt a gradualist approach to address issues related to border conflicts.

‘We do not have a specific policy on border conflicts. Each of the cases you mention has to be considered in its own right. The EU can reduce tensions but not through diplomacy … more implicit incentives …’

Another informant agreed and when referring to the Greek-Turkish Aegean disputes stated that these issues have been discussed at the Commission level since 1999 and as a strategy the EU offered membership as an incentive to Turkey, which includes as a general condition good neighbourly relations. Such EU incentives mark regular discourses across actors and across cases as the same informant said with regards to Europe’s North:

‘In the case of Europe’s North we could have included the resolution of the border issue as a condition in membership negotiations with Latvia and Lithuania … we could have even included as a condition the resolution of the Russian minorities issue (between Estonia and Lithuania) … before accession but we could not do this because Russia is involved too… We don’t do that … we try to create incentives …’

When making references to incentives offered by the EU to conflict parties, informants frequently compared this path to the stick-strategy adopted by the US (in border conflict cases).\textsuperscript{26} In fact, a regular marker of informants’ discourses on the EU’s strategies on border conflict transformation was the need to express EU paths in contrast to those of the US.

\textsuperscript{25} The question of whether membership conditionality is a carrot or a stick is open to debate: the EU may perceive it as a carrot whereas the conflict party may perceive it as a stick.

\textsuperscript{26} This is not the perception from Turkey where the US is seen as a ‘better’ mediator, probably because its positions are seen as more pro-Turkish.
‘In the case of the Middle East conflict and the use of carrots and sticks … the EU is not withholding sticks – like the US often does. Decision making here [at the Council] is complex. This is not an anti-Israeli entity, even if some of our Israeli friends think so. There have never been agreement on applying sanctions on Israel … there are always at least one or two Member States who would oppose such a move […] Germany … ] It is possible to use our leverage against Israel for examples on rules of origin … [sanctions] will not work’.  

‘The principles of the US and the EU on the Middle East are similar. Differences lie in the methodology’.  

Another interesting observation across cases was informants’ reference to the importance of the single market, the free trade area and aspects of the latter that are included in the Association Agreements and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (as EU strategies in conflict cases). This is clearly one area where the Commission is actively involved in across cases and relates to the third path.

Path three, in fact, emerges as the most common EU strategy in border conflict cases, across cases and across actors. One Commission informant referred to the EU’s support, through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for opposition parties in the northern part of Cyprus. Such regular markers across EU discourses and the ways in which this path leads to the fourth path were expressed by informants as follows:

‘EU interventions in the NI case were carried out under the regional policy umbrella … Both British and Irish governments agreed that economic development is the best route to peace and reconciliation … The EU helps people to see commonalities - not just differences - in highly divided societies [Northern Ireland context]’

---

28 It seems also important to distinguish between what Commission actors think is good – which may be policies ‘on their turf’ – and what is regarded as effective in the EUBorderConf conceptual framework.
‘At the Commission we do not have the competence to aim for direct paths … maybe through Solana’s Security Strategy in a political form we may in the future … our main instruments are Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) … creating incentives [carrots] and disincentives [sticks] to show people in Cyprus what they can gain … through our contacts with NGOs, business societies, associations, etc to bring public opinion along …’

This finding also corresponds with the identity literature that applies the concept of identity change and argues that, in the Cyprus case for example, a triple identity is dawning on and for Turkish Cypriots, an identity that is prepared to synthesise the Turkish-Cypriot component of a Cypriot political consciousness under “the dream of European citizenship” (Melakopides, 2004).

2.5 Across Actors

It emerges that the Council and the Commission work closely in some cases where disputes are considered as bilateral issues between two states as in the case of Greece and Turkey. Moreover, in this dispute, the Commission goes through various measures to avoid the Europeanisation of bilateral issues - despite various attempts by Greece to promote this case as a European dispute. (MEPs were particularly critical of Greek lobbying in this regard). The Commission’s strategy is instead focused on influencing Turkey, in particular through its regular reports (Commission, 2003b).29

In terms of path one, Commission informants on the case of Europe’s North express the EP’s resolutions as too ‘heavy’ an instrument to relate to border issues.30 In general, Commission informants clearly emerged as having a preference for path 3 in all five border conflict cases.31

‘One of the preconditions for EU involvement in NI is the means to do it. The PEACE programme gives an added value to conflict parties. We try to reach

29 Although some analysts might argue that trying to influence Turkey through membership conditionality is a form of Europeanisation of the issue.
31 This also goes to show Commission/institutionally anchored interests.
those who were most affected by the conflict … we work on changing people’s
perceptions on the ‘other’ side …’

In those border conflict cases where the Council is involved, actors prefer path 1 [with
the exception of Northern Ireland where the Council was not involved]. One
informant from the Council’s Policy Unit and Task Force on the Middle East further
argued that apart from the EU’s strategies, this conflict requires objectivity for a
positive impact of the EU which contrasts with the lack of objectivity amongst the
conflict parties and the US. Member states representatives perceive the Council as the
EU institution with the formal competence to adopt EU strategies relating to border
conflicts and acknowledge that this is an area closely guarded by the Council. MEPs
shared their preference for path 1 with the Council representatives across cases [albeit
not so convincingly in the Middle East case].

A rather unexpected conclusion was however derived from the Brussels interviews
with regards to members of the European Parliament. On the one hand and in general,
MEPs were highly critical of the EU and specifically of the Council, the Commission
and of the EP themselves. They often referred to splits in the EP on specific conflict
cases on the basis of country representations:

‘For example, Austrian and German MEPs and Christian Democratic parties are
in general against Turkey joining the EU, Britain and Labour parties are in
favour and Green parties are in favour but not as much …[This is reflected] at
the Council some ministers are against Turkish membership – Austria, the
Netherlands, France …while at the Commission they are more cautious …’

On the other hand, most MEPS seem to be driven by particular (member state)
interests in most of the conflict cases. This is the case, for example, of MEPs who
refer to their Greek counterparts influence on issues relating to the Cyprus case. One
can argue that this depicts a weak EP position in the context of the EU’s role in the
transformation of border conflicts. However, as mentioned above, most MEPs

32 Interview at the United Kingdom Permanent Representation to the European Union, January 2004.
interviewed emphasise the importance of conditionality and therefore path 1 is a common strategy across cases for MEPs (followed by path 3). As one MEP stated:

‘European integration is the only instrument to solve sectarian divides’

and another MEP:

‘Conditionality is very important on both sides (of the Cyprus conflict) – better to keep both under pressure’

This observation on conditionality from the Brussels interviews is similar to the EU’s argumentations in the various documentation sources. For example, on the 5th November 2003, following an assessment of Turkey’s progress toward EU membership during 2003, the EUobserver reported that the situation in Cyprus marked an ‘obstacle’ to Turkey’s bid to join the EU.34 This was clearly highlighted in the Commission’s November Report and on the same day, Romano Prodi, Commission President, advised the EP that although Turkey had made substantial progress, failure to achieve a settlement on the island may hinder its own aspirations. Prodi reiterated this ‘carrot’ during his speech at the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara on the 14th January 2004. During the said speech, Prodi made several references to the Copenhagen European Council conclusions (December 2002 which gave the green light to Turkey’s EU bid) and the political criteria required for Turkey’s accession negotiations to be opened and specific references to the situation in Cyprus:

‘It is high time to end the outdated division of Cyprus and its capital city… It would be a source of inspiration for us all if Turkish and Greek Cypriots were able to enter the EU together …The objective should be to reach a settlement on the basis of the Annan plan in time for a united Cyprus to accede to the European Union on 1 May 2004’.35

---

Conditionality is also currently a recurring debate in the literature (Schmidt, 2003). Through the use of such compulsory forms of perturbation, this is a good case of how the EU attempts to exert its influence on conflict parties. The use of direct political statements serves as a carrot for conflict parties to act in order to ensure that, for example, negotiations on Turkey’s accession will open by early next year. These explicit discursive frameworks also enable socialisation processes of various Turkish representative bodies in Brussels. Informants from TUSIAD for example expressed the importance of being based in Brussels in order to understand and appreciate the EU’s institutional and discursive context. In this case path 1 may also indirectly lead to path 2.36

The European Parliament also issued a clear statement in support of and expressing its agreement with the Commission’s stance on this use of implicit conditionality:

‘[The EP] Agrees totally with the Commission’s political assessment that a failure to reach agreement on Cyprus could pose a serious obstacle to Turkey’s European ambitions … the Cyprus question thus amounts to a major stumbling block in Turkey’s path and a political test of its European resolve’.37

In the case of Member States representatives, the path-picture is not so very clear. In the cases of Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, path 3 is however the strategy that MS representatives agree on:

‘In the case of Northern Ireland, integration, if anything, aggravated the conflict … the positive transformation of the conflict has come about partly through the EU’s involvement in terms of financial assistance, structural funds, the PEACE programmes, INTERREG … where the pooling of each party’s sovereignty conditioned them to think in new ways …’

Informants interviewed on the Northern Ireland case agreed that the Council did not have any marked impact on the process towards reconciliation between the two

36 Interview at TUSIAD, Brussels, January 2004.
37 PR\519012EN.doc (PE 329.354) copy given by Andrew Duff, January 2004.
communities in this dispute while the European Parliament and the Commission were actively engaged especially in their efforts to ensure that the border was not institutionalised.

Explicit references to the forces of integration were also included in informants’ discourses. For example, one informant declared that:

‘It was because of the joining of the EEC of both states in 1973 [ref: Northern Ireland case] that a process of the dismantling of mental borders began. Moreover, with the increasing development of the Single Market, the security situation on the ground improved. So yes, integration is a strong force in transforming border conflicts, although this is more difficult in cases where conflict parties are not Members of the EU’.

Northern Ireland therefore provides a good case where the EU’s policies directed at connecting conflict parties with its institutional and discursive framework has had a positive impact. As mentioned earlier, a common argument across actors is that through the Single Market integration programme, the EU had a direct impact on societal actors on both sides of the conflict through the creation of company contacts, personal contacts and people’s movement across the ‘line’ in search of better financial opportunities. Here there was also a change of identity scripts when people brushed aside any emotional or identity differences in search of economic benefits.\(^{38}\) There was a further perception change that relates to the border. Whereas previously, it was deemed too dangerous to cross the border, since 1994, people have experienced more interaction across the line. In this case, the third path has also led to path 4 in that NGOs became involved on the basis of the EU’s financial sources for inter-communal cooperation. Path 3 emerges as the strategy where the EU has had a positive impact in this case, across actors. All actors also agreed that not only is PEACE a success EU story but that this strategy moved very quickly from the idea stage to the implementation phase and shows that the EU has a different and more flexible approach when border conflicts involve members of the EU. This is a model that EU actors have been thinking of testing out in Cyprus.

\(^{38}\) Interview at the office of the Northern Ireland Executive, January, 2004.
In the case of Northern Ireland, there was agreement across actors about the role played by Jacques Delors in the initial stages of the PEACE programme following the 1994 ceasefire as the main early warning signal. Informants were however critical of the Haagerup report:

‘Thatcher was furious as to why the EP did not inform her of what MEPs were up to … it was an issue of sovereignty and the EP was getting involved in the internal affairs of Member States. Haagerup was not neutral and his assistant (a liberal) took part in the NI election’.

What was very surprising is the fact that path 2 was rarely made explicit as a strategy for EU influence.\(^\text{39}\) One MEP referred to the EP’s Joint Parliamentary Committee on Turkey which attempts to foster more grounds for Turkish politicians to legitimise their reforms and policies but:

‘The relations between the EP and the Turkish Parliament are very difficult. We do not share the same ideologies. It will take some twenty years before any change can be observed … Turkey needs to combat the Greek influence through full membership of the EU. Turkey needs to learn how things work. A long, profound, cultural revolution is needed in Turkey’

[This relates to the socialisation of policy-makers in conflict regions into a ‘European discourse that builds upon the frame of integration and peace’, in other words path 2]

Perhaps one exception was a reference made by the same MEP for the same case of Turkey/Greece but in the context of the modernising process in Greece:

‘Perceptions do change … gradually … for example Greece during the 1980s and 1990s is very different from Greece today which is modernising. EU members gradually learn new lessons about the essence of pooling sovereignty …’

\(^{39}\) This could be the case because this is not a direct form of influence.
This view also marks change across time.

Although MEPs were very critical of the ineptitude of the Council, the Special Representative and the Commission and its Commissioner for External Relations as well as the EP on the ground in Cyprus, the Council emerges as more active when the Presidency has strong ties to or interests in the conflict:

‘Berlusconi’s favourite issue when he was President was Israel’s membership. He spoke of this as the President of the Council. The Italian Presidency was pretty successful on enlargement processes … it managed the Turkish-Cyprus-Greek issue pretty effectively …’  

‘The EU is not a united body. A very good example of this is the case of Turkey’s accession to the EU. Commissioner Verheugen is pro-Turkish membership. The EP has a completely different attitude … there is a 50-50 split for opening negotiations with Turkey. MEP Oostlander has close ties with the Dutch government, [of course] which will be holding the Presidency soon … when the decision on Turkey has to be taken.’

On this case, actors across institutions also agreed that the Commission found itself on new territory when it had to deal with the Turkish issue. Informants argued that although the principle of enlargement and integration has always enjoyed the support of all EU parties, the case of Turkey has split the EU institutions like never before. For example, when Greece applied for EU membership, there was a strong reluctance from the Commission to include this country as a member state but the Council overruled the Commission’s opinion. In the case of Turkey the Council is not yet sending a clear signal and hence the Commission finds itself in unchartered waters. This was a clear regular marker across EU discourses.

---

40 Interview at the UK Permanent Representation to the EU, January 2004.
41 Although some may argue that Verheugen was not always pro-Turkish membership. MEPs, Commissioners and member states also change their views and are persuaded.
42 Ibid.
2.6 Instruments

In terms of instruments, in general, actors across institutions agree that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the Common Strategies (European Council, 2000; Commission, 2001), the New Neighbourhood Policy (Commission 2003a), and similar EU strategies are not so relevant in the context of the EU’s paths to the transformation of border conflicts: With some mixed attitudes and exceptions:

‘Our Wider Europe/New Neighbourhood Policy is aimed at showing conflict parties that they have a great deal to gain from relations with the EU and these gains cannot be attained before they solve things on the ground’

‘The EMP is a mild instrument … but a positive factor … It is better that it should exist than it doesn’t… There are occasional spin offs … It serves as a mild and indirect CBM’\(^{43}\)

‘There is no role for the EMP in the Cyprus or Turkey-Greece cases’

But most informants argued that it is good that the EU has these instruments at its disposal (as opposed to not having these strategies) but they only contribute a small role in the EU’s strategies on border conflicts. One informant on the Middle East conflict expressed his concern that in this case, many actors from the conflict parties actually use the Barcelona process (EMP) to hide behind their alternative motives and in this manner avoid implementing the required reforms. He also did not hesitate to claim that the creation of the Quartet’s Road Map was an EU-Council initiative.\(^{44}\) The same informant also asserts that in the latest Association Council meeting with Israel of November 2003 the Council notes Israel’s interest in the Wider Europe policy and will consider the modalities of Israel’s participation in the New Neighbourhood policy, in effect carving out an EU path for its involvement in the Middle East conflict.\(^{45}\)

\(^{43}\) Interviews at the Commission, January 2004.

\(^{44}\) Interview at the Council of the European Union, January 2004. This contrasts with the general perception that the Road Map was mainly US-driven.

In the other cases, an informant on the case of Europe’s North stated that:

‘The Common Strategy on Russia is generally recognised as an inefficient instrument … Solana would surely not qualify this strategy as an effective one’. 46

However, references were made across actors to the importance of the South East Europe Group that offers a forum for close contact between the Commission and the Council:

‘We have close contact with Member States through committees, the South-East Europe Group … The Commission gives feedback to the Council and vice versa … often we are in full agreement … and this is reflected through Council Conclusions, yearly reports …’

Other important instruments (across actors and cases) referred to by informants are the Delegations of the Commission (Representative Offices) in Cyprus, Turkey, Moscow, Israel/Palestine and in the case of Europe’s North a number of consulates and technical offices recently opened in Kaliningrad by Germany, Sweden and other Nordic member states.

‘In the case of Cyprus, the Commission has carved out a role for itself, led by the UN. The Commission has been encouraging the movement of people from north to south and vice versa. This has been possible because the Commission is well represented on the ground in Cyprus’. 47

Such instruments appear as regular markers in EU discourses and reiterate the importance of path three as one of the main strategies of EU influence in border conflicts. However, the informants questioned on the Cyprus case were in agreement that, despite several fora and instruments, there has been a general neglect of the

47 Interview at the UK Permanent Representation to the EU, January 2004. This view is in contradiction with an earlier perspective from a Commission official who laments the Commission Delegation’s imbalance on the ground in Cyprus.
Cyprus issue by the EU, and refer to the fact that there is no specific ‘desk’ dealing with the ‘Cyprus problem’. MEPs moreover lamented the situation of the EP’s Joint Parliamentary Committee on Cyprus (as another EU instrument/forum) that is constantly captured by the Greek positions.

One observes that in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there was a consensus across actors that paths one and three are the most frequently adopted EU strategies. EU relations with conflict parties are mainly expressed through direct, EU elite interactions with the political elite and the NGO communities on the ground (from both sides). The reports produced by the various NGOs serve as valuable sources for counter checks on EU information emanating from Commission delegations.

2.7 Across Time

The groundwork for sustained discussions in the context of the EEC with regards to border conflicts such as the Middle East was laid in the first meeting of European Political Cooperation (EPC) foreign ministers that was held in Munich, Germany on November 19, 1970. This new framework marked a series of efforts by EU member states to coordinate their foreign policies beyond economic affairs into uncharted territory. In 1991, with the Maastricht Treaty on European Union, a “Common Foreign and Security Policy” (CFSP) replaced the EPC. Since the establishment of the EPC/CFSP, the EU has attracted an increasing number of critiques arguing that this regional organisation is unable to solve complex conflicts in (the Balkans) or around its own borders (such as the Middle East). This background may go to explain why [in the initial analysis of data collected] an unexpected observation from Brussels relates to an increasing sense of realism in informants’ discourses on the EU’s strategies on border conflict transformation. The emergence of this discourse includes actors’ reflections of the EU’s strategic interest as well as the use of military capacity in conflict situations. This argument was shared across actors and across

48 Interview with Nathalie Tocci, September 2003 and interviews in Brussels January 2004 (MEP).
50 This may be the effect of post 9/11. As one informant put it, since the events of 9/11, Europe has become more conservative. Interview in Brussels, European Commission, January 2004.
cases with most informants (as mentioned earlier) making comparisons with the efforts of the US as a powerful state in having the clout to act:

One MEP said:

‘In the foreign policy of the EU, the first objective is defence and the promotion of a just, international order’.

EU states have recently embarked on serious discussions on joint military operations within the context of European integration.51

This was a particularly clear observation in the case of informants interviewed on the Middle East conflict:

‘The Solana 2003 security strategy report reflected the first time that the EU presented its view on security. According to this strategy, we do not need to be invited to be involved [in border conflicts]. Solving the Middle East conflict is vital to our interests. Europe is a political concept. With enlargement we will have borders with Syria … it’s a security strategy. We want our vicinity to be stable and peaceful … these countries are engaged in violent conflicts and pose a security problem for us’.52

This may be read as a realist speech act marking new EU concerns on security that may relate to the post-9/11 syndrome, the war against terrorism and the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is a striking discourse in comparison to the literature on the EU’s foreign policy where critics argue that the EU cannot have a defence and security policy when its foreign policy is still in the making (Carlsnaes, Sjursen and White, 2004; Peterson and Sjursen, 1998). On a second reading of the material gathered from Brussels, the cross-referencing to Solana’s Security Strategy paper may relate more to the impact the EU ought to have in and around surrounding areas rather than mirroring purely military strategies. This consistent feature (referring to Solana’s

paper) may also be a way of expressing EU policies that are not those of the US. This point may be the subject of further debate.

2.8 Some reflections on the patterns of EU pathways in the transformation of border conflicts

As mentioned above, an unexpected argument following the interviews in Brussels relates to the lack of effectiveness of EU instruments in transforming border conflicts such as the EMP, the Common Strategies, etc. In the conceptual framework adopted here (Albert, Diez, Stetter, 2004) it is argued that the EMP (with its linkages to association) can be seen as an attempt to facilitate the EU’s role as perturbator through the EU framework. This is in line with a commonly held belief that the EMP, with the Association Agreements at its core, still remains the only environment where Israeli and Arab officials sit together around the same table for discussions on a regular basis, despite the tragic ongoing events in the Middle East conflict. It is also the only forum where the Israeli government accepts the EU’s involvement in matters relating to security of the Middle East (Pace, 2004). There is however, a discrepancy between this commonly held view and the recent results from the interviews in Brussels. The commonly held view in Brussels, across actors, across institutions and across cases is that instruments such as the EMP and the Common Strategies are good for the EU to have in place (rather than not having them) but these instruments have little by way of impact on the EU’s role in the transformation of border conflicts into lines of cooperation. This finding goes to challenge the EUBorderConf’s conceptual framework that highlights the EU’s capacity to act as a perturbator of conflict through a number of association agreements. This observation was a common one across cases and actors. For example in the Cyprus case, one MEP stated that:

‘the Association Agreement with Cyprus was not unuseful but one should not exaggerate its usefulness… The EMP is an economic and cultural instrument … [but] the EU is not designed and not capable to manage the Middle East,'

---

54 This is open to debate since the framework is open as to whether a pathway has impact or not.
Another common finding across actors and cases is the emphasis made on the authority of EU member states, especially in areas related to security affairs (and where EU states enjoy veto rights). The high profile of the CFSP High Representative is not in doubt (as a representative of the collective will of EU member states)\(^55\), but where EU states disagree on an EU path in the case of a border dispute, they can block a decision. This is particularly the case in policy areas where member states can opt in or opt out on a case-by-case (European Security and Defence Policy or ESDP) or permanent (Schengen) basis.\(^56\) At present, the functions of the CFSP High Representative and those of the Commissioner for External Relations are separated but the Convention on the Future of Europe may involve these two roles being combined into a single EU foreign secretary Commissioner. This may augur well for the future role of the EU in border conflicts since, according to informants, the current relationship between the High Representative and the Commissioner for External Relations is at times competitive (although not explicitly so) and often impedes a common EU path on a specific case. Challenges relating to the intergovernmental versus the supranational elements of the EU’s role in the transformation of border conflicts remain.

3. Evaluative Section

3.1 Patterns of continuity, change and adaptation

“Panta rei” (everything changes) according to the Greek philosopher Heracleitos. In the same way, border conflicts are also subject to change. It has often been argued that membership of the European Union can act as a catalyst for change in conflict areas and this argument falls within the scope of the *acquis communautaire*. Moreover, in an indirect way such reasoning falls even beyond the latter. The impact the EU can have on the transformation of border conflicts can be a) designed and

---

\(^55\) Although some analysts view the role of the High Representative as much more independent from that of member states. I thank Stephan Stetter for this insight.

politically highly salient, or b) it may be gradual and incremental. In the short term this may not be so evident but in the medium and long run such impact is surely noticeable and significant.

In this respect, empirical evidence from the Brussels perspective on the five border conflict cases of the EUBorderConf project and the analysis thereafter, indicates that within the context of Europeanisation, these two broad strategies of transforming border conflicts into lines of cooperation are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The interviews held in Brussels suggest that the EU impact in border conflicts is less visible than for example that of the US. In addition, the EU perspective on how conflict parties perceive the large-scale adaptation pressure on domestic polities, politics and policies bring us to distinguish between three levels of EU influence, namely low, moderate and high. This intensity usually varies in accordance with the area and concentration of the EU acquis in question (for those EUBorderConf cases where this applies especially Cyprus and Turkey). For example, when there is an institutional incompatibility of European policy requirements with relevant national structures, processes and cultures, the parties in Turkey feel a high level of pressure to bring their domestic policies up to scratch with EU (and potentially leads to path 2 as an EU strategy).

Europeanisation is often highlighted as an important factor for change in border conflicts. The role of the EU in the transformation of border conflicts emerges more clearly in the recent changes noted in Cyprus. Two key events ignited this transformation. The signing of the Accession Treaty by Cyprus on April 16th and the lifting of restrictions on free movement to and from the north of Cyprus by Rauf Denktash highlight the catalytic role of the EU. These momentous events may be linked to EU decisions regarding the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU while the initiative by Denktash can be read in the context of Turkey’s wish to join the Union. The EU has thus had a significant impact on the socio-psychological and politico-cultural landscape in Cyprus which marks an important instance of the EU’s effective mediating role vis-à-vis Cyprus, Turkey and Greece and as a peace-builder in and around its borders.
Therefore, building on a model adopted by Agapiou-Josephides (2004), we can argue that Europeanisation occurs at various levels:

- Europeanisation occurs at the policies level (for example, competition, environment, employment, agriculture, consumer protection, etc). This constitutes an important domain where change in a border conflict is visible since it is the core product of the accession negotiations process (carrot) and not the by-product of this process. The results of this process are important not just at the national level but even more so at the EU level.

- Europeanisation can occur at the polity level: for example, institutions (Parliament, Executive, Judiciary, etc). For example, in the case of the Middle East, the European Union has provided ongoing support for reform in the Palestinian Authority. EU informants acknowledge that:

  ‘… this is a new element in thinking and doing … this is a system which functions and then we can work on other issues to transform conflict’\(^{57}\)

- Europeanisation can also effect the politics level: political parties, interest groups, etc. In the case of northern Cyprus for example, the EU may seek to pursue its own objectives in the hope that they lead to a transformation of a border conflict, by way of bypassing unwilling political headings and by linking up with wider societal actors:\(^{58}\)

  “We are working on bi-communal projects. The EU does not work directly with the northern part of the island but through the UNDP that subcontracts projects. For example we have the Nicosia Plan …”\(^{59}\)

- Europeanisation can also occur at the society level: for example through areas related to culture, citizenship and identity. In the conceptual framework of Albert, Diez, Stetter (2004) this relates EU pathways (for the transformation of border conflicts) with indirect changes in the underlying identity-scripts of

---

\(^{57}\) Interview, European Commission, January 2004.

\(^{58}\) Indirectly though, not directly as in path 3, or, path 3 often leading to path 4.

\(^{59}\) Interview at the European Commission, DG Enlargement, 19 January 2004.
conflict parties, thus supporting a re-construction of identities that is conducive to peaceful relations between the factions.

**Conclusion**

The main argument in this paper is that even though the EU actors may appear to make more realist statements regarding the EU’s strategic interests and possible use of military capacity (references to the CFSP etc), path 3 still emerges as the strategy the EU adopts most often and this frequently facilitates the fourth path.

‘Economic activity, liberal and competitive environments are the key to resolving the Cyprus conflict. We need to address employers, their economic interests, their workforces. Trade is a good thing. The leaderships in Germany and France grasped this reality after the Second World War. We need to effect this change in Cyprus, Turkey and Greece from the old generation to new thinking … the EU takes small steps’.

‘the EU indirectly effects the political aspect of the [Cyprus] conflict through its financial co-operation projects and indirect dealings with opposition parties to Denktash in the north of the island’.

‘The more explicit and directly we try to be involved, the more difficult it gets for all actors from all institutions to act especially the EP, individual MS …’

This connective impact is often directed at the wider societal level but in some instances also at the political leadership level (and may be indirect rather than direct). As an economic giant (but still a political dwarf), the EU’s use of the third path signals what the EU is best at, namely, classical development assistance programmes, etc (financial clout). As Kagan (2003) argues, although the EU might not be described as a military power (yet), we can safely refer to this paradise as a model for

---

60 Interview at the EP, January 2004.
61 Interview at the Commission, DG Enlargement, January 2004.
62 Pace, M, 2004 (forthcoming).
peace that continues to attract new members. And in order to influence border conflicts, the EU is best at wielding its traditional tools of power – economic assistance.\textsuperscript{63}

‘Incentives make a difference. We cannot have any illusion of grand breakthroughs. We try to improve bad economic conditions [in conflict zones] to reduce tensions there. We do make use of our existing strengths rather than try to carve out a new role for the EU as a new actor on the international level. We are best with our classical model/strategies that is, financing, budgetary support etc which can then reinforce more direct efforts’

This claim here is very much in line with the line of reasoning found in the literature (Dorussen, 2001) where analysts argue that the best path to peaceful resolutions in conflict situations is one that offers positive incentives and carrots rather than sticks.

In the case of Cyprus, one can say that the EU’s strategy has changed from path 1 to path 3. The EU’s external economic activities are by far quite extensive across all five cases. Thus path 3 is the most frequent strategy adopted by the EU since it reflects the real tools possessed by “civilian powers” such as the EU itself.\textsuperscript{64} But in some cases, as in the Northern Ireland case, the EU has involved itself in the creation of entirely new strategies (PEACE).

In conclusion, the interplay between actor-driven and structural approaches to the EU’s impact on the transformation of border conflicts becomes evident from the analysis of the interviews carried out in Brussels and from the evaluation of this data with the existing literature.

\textsuperscript{63} This refers to both path 1 and 3.

\textsuperscript{64} Further research could potentially investigate this further. The dominance of pathway 3 may be related to the fact that informants see this path as dominant because they are engaged in it, that is Commission actors in particular are directly involved in EU strategies aimed at the wider societal level including direct EU support activities. EU policy makers may generally relate less to pathways two and four since these occur outside of Brussels, namely in the conflict societies. I thank Stephan Stetter for this discussion.
Moreover, the intra-organisational fragmentation places the perturbation by the EU in border conflicts in a challenging moment in time with new institutional mechanisms in the making, not least the Future Convention of the European Union.

In this paper, I have attempted to show how the EUBorderConf conceptual model on the EU as a perturbator of conflict plays out from the EU perspective. There was general agreement among informants that the more parties to a conflict ‘mould’ into the EU’s framework, the more likely the chance that the EU’s strategy of integration and association as a process towards peace will have an impact.

In terms of early warning signals, in the Cyprus and Greek-Turkish cases, the visit by Romano Prodi in mid-January 2004 was referred to by informants as an important symbolic event as it marks the first time a President has visited Turkey. Informants agreed that it is usually Member States who raise concerns about border conflict issues either through the South-East European group (in the cases of Cyprus, Greece-Turkey) or through other committees, political fora or working groups.

Why should a regional economic organization like the EU emerge as still struggling to develop its own policy vis-à-vis border conflict transformation? Although informants in Brussels do not relate to an EU policy on border conflicts, they repeatedly make reference to the impact of the EU particularly through the third path in the possible transformation of such border disputes. What is clear is that there is some advancement through small steps in the learning process and making of an EU border conflict transformation policy. One of the pieces of this puzzle to bear in mind is that the cases of Cyprus, Israel/Palestine, Turkey/Greece, Northern Ireland and Europe’s North have had their impact on the EU system itself. As one informant put it:

‘The EU’s involvement in Northern Ireland improved the EU’s image in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The EU has shown that it is able to deal with conflicts in its midst and that it can assist in the process of transformation of a conflict. It is an undisputable fact that the situation on the ground is much better than it was [prior to 1994].
Through small steps in its strategies towards these border conflicts and through its impact on these areas of the world, the EU may eventually be acknowledged as an international political actor. In acknowledging this eventuality, one has to bear in mind that the EU was not created to solve international problems but to ensure peaceful relations amongst its members. In this context, through integration and association, the EU is best fit to have an impact on disputes between its members or associated partner countries. So far, the main strategy of EU impact has been in the form of financial support (the third path). The best example of a core moment of EU involvement in the transformation of border conflicts is the PEACE programme on Northern Ireland.

In terms of the EUBorderConf conceptual framework and the model of stages of conflict, it emerges that EU strategies are targeted at diminishing the intensity of conflicts through processes of building closer links with the conflict parties on the ground.65

Further research will attempt to explore how holding the EU Presidency affects a new EU member state, particularly in the EU’s strategy towards border conflicts. Another area for further investigation relates to the discourse of MEPs. Since the finding of a very weak EP emerges from a small sample of MEPs interviewed in Brussels in January, a larger sample may be tested through an alternative methodological approach (such as a survey amongst MEPs). However, with elections looming, this may be a difficult method in the short run.

There is no clear “end product” to the paths of EU impact on border conflicts. Such strategies imply a continuing process of action that evolves over time. This can be appreciated in view of the still-evolving institutions and procedures of EU policy on conflict cases. Process always matters in fully explaining any EU path. European integration has through time involved the use of economic cooperation to reduce political conflicts among EU member states. It should therefore come as no surprise that path 3 is the most frequent pattern of EU strategies on border conflict transformation. The Commission emerges as the main driving force behind paths used

to achieve economic development in conflict cases. But this gives us no reason to privilege the supranational institutions of the EC. In fact, member states still have an important role in whether an EU path is approved or not: state interests or preferences impact on EU strategies (as in the case of Greece in the context of the Cyprus issue). How the EU’s impact on border conflict transformation evolves depends on both intergovernmental and supranational processes. It is hoped that the actor-structure-process focus of this paper sheds light on the role of this important regional organisation.
Handout 1. *Patterns of EU strategies (paths) in the transformation of border conflicts*

Table 1.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Europe’s North</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Cyprus</th>
<th>Greece/ Turkey</th>
<th>Israel/ Palestine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>1+3</td>
<td>3&gt;4</td>
<td>3&gt;4</td>
<td>1+3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not involved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1+3</td>
<td>1+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1+3</td>
<td>1+3</td>
<td>1,2,3,4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member States</td>
<td>3+1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4?</td>
<td>1+3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Russia’s role</td>
<td>US role</td>
<td>UN role; US role</td>
<td>NATO’s role; US role</td>
<td>US role; Arab countries; UN role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Shading represents a change across time in the EU’s strategy on Cyprus. Initially more direct path (carrot of membership) but gradually and more recently indirect path (initiatives and incentives for NGOs, business community, public at large, to view, foster reconciliation, acceptance of both sides for need to come together and share ‘philosophy of peace process’
- Direct paths (1 and 3) most effective strategies
- Path 3 (wider societal level) most effective of all across cases and across actors
Handout 2

Expected:

- Where the Council is active, its focus is on the first as well as the third path, often through supporting the Commission in its activities.
- Where the Commission is active, it focuses on the third path (often) in order to facilitate the fourth path.
- Where no member or candidate state is involved, and with the increasing importance of the CFSP, the first path gains in importance.
- In terms of patterns of continuity, as expected, the involvement of EU actors in border conflicts depends on their institutional position within the acquis, that is on their respective competencies. For example, across actors and cases, informants agree that: ‘The EU has no full competence in CFSP issues’
- The EU as a whole, is more active in third path activities and sees itself as much less successful in enforcing the first path, with the exception of the enlargement process: ‘The accession negotiations have been a catalyst for the solution in Cyprus. Although the Commission has no specific role to engage in the Cyprus problem directly, it can through accession negotiations… The association agreement was a crucial starting point along the path of negotiations, through the acquis obligations …’
- Informants agreed that the EU as a whole does not have the traditional / military power to impose agreements (use sanctions) and is dependent on the approval of the affected states (especially in the cases of Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Russia but also in the other cases: Israel/Palestine and Greece-Turkey too) : ‘We could have told Cyprus it was a condition for joining the EU to solve the conflict but Greece influenced our decision and would have veto power over issues relating to Turkey …’

67 Ibid.
This may explain why, the overwhelming conflict conception, especially within the Commission, is centred on violence in civil society. This goes to support the expected arguments on the issue that how EU actors perceive the essential nature of each conflict - as a territorial issue, a human rights issue or otherwise, helps explain their attitude to how the conflict should be resolved.

A related observation is that while most actors emphasise the third path, they also display an ontology strongly biased towards economic rationalism: ‘We need to teach them the acquis … for example, through our contributions to bi-communal projects (informant at Commission DG Enlargement, Cyprus case)’

What clearly emerges as a common strategy of the EU’s impact on border conflict transformation is the DIRECT approach (both in terms of path 1 and 3): [with the exception of one informant who emphasised indirect paths]

The power of Member States was clearly evident in the strategies adopted by the EU in its policy-making processes on border conflict transformations. In the case of Cyprus, Greece and the UK emerged as the most active Member states.

Unexpected:

- Little role for EMP, Common Strategies, Wider Europe/New Neighbourhood policies/instruments. In the case of Israel and Palestine, association agreements are not perceived as having been very productive and positive in bringing about a change in the conflict (thus far) but at least these instruments provide a forum for EU dialogue with the conflict parties.

- According to most informants, the EU has had little impact on the day-to-day lives of people in violent conflict areas (with the exception of Northern Ireland). Council informants on the Middle East case argued that the lives of people have actually deteriorated (for both Israelis and Palestinians alike). This is also reflected in media reports that recently described how cuts in welfare benefits have forced poor families in Israel to shop without paying.\(^{68}\)

---

• An underlying sense of increasing realism in EU discourses emerges across actors. One MEP for example claimed that: ‘Since 1954, there has been a general suppression of security and defence issues along the integration process (for obvious reasons). But if our constitution (Convention on the Future of the European Union) becomes a reality, security and defence will become the driving forces of integration’.

• Path II is rarely made explicit as a strategy for EU influence.

• The EP is driven by particular (member state) interests in most conflicts.

• The Council is more active when the Presidency has strong ties to or interests in the conflict.
APPENDIX A. Questionnaire used for interviews in Brussels, January 2004.

www.euborderconf.bham.ac.uk

Questionnaire for Brussels interviews

The aim of these interviews is to investigate whether the EU has an impact – either direct or indirect – on the transformation of the five border conflicts. The main area of concern for WP7 is that of investigating (and for the research fellow to observe) how the EU deals with the five border conflict cases and to identify points of intervention by the EU (core moments of EU involvement) in the evolution of conflicts and establish whether the EU has had an impact:

This was a tentative list of questions, some of which were used during the interviews in Brussels:

1. Decision-making process:
   a) Who identifies a problem?
   b) How are you making a decision on this?
   c) Which factor/actors influence this?
   d) What is the role of the NGOs?

2. Out of the top of your head, how would you characterize the conflict?

3. How are these conflicts perceived in the various corridors of the EU institutions? (How EU actors see the conflict)

4. How do EU informants perceive the essential nature of each conflict – as a territorial issue, a human rights issue or? (This will help explain informants’ attitude to how the conflict should be resolved)

5. How are these conflicts constructed in the EU’s discursive framework?

6. Does the EU hold a different approach towards countries which:
a) are members of the EU (e.g. Greece with regards to Gr-Turkey conflict),
b) are part of the enlargement process (Cyprus) or
c) (like Israel/Palestine) are in neither of these categories but nevertheless are
close (geographically) and have a wide range of commercial and cultural links
with the EU (The carrot and stick issues are very important here)?

7. How do different negotiation processes/agreements/ EU involvement in each
conflict relate (openly or latently) to issues of identity and interests? (Ask less
directly e.g. on identity)

8. How effective are the EU’s instruments in transforming border conflicts eg.
ESDP’s innovative high representative? CFSP and the Political and Security
Committee (PSC) as new political institutions? Euro-Mediterranean Partnership?
Common Strategies? etc

9. How do EU actors communicate with the conflict parties?

10. How do different actors relate to each case and how do these actors see the EU
(and its role in the cases)?
For example, do informants see the EU as a perturbator /outside actor external to
each conflict/ as an unspecified influence?

11. Do informants see the EU as having brought about or contributed to any
change in the conceptualisation of borders?
How do the respective institutional actors perceive the EU’s effect on these cases?

12. Do informants refer to any impact the EU may have had or is having on the
daily life of people living in border regions? On their identity constructions? How
do informants describe the EU’s relation to these changes?

13. Do informants refer to any specific reasons for the EU’s
effectiveness/ineffectiveness/failure of EU involvement/non-involvement?

14. Which forms of governance does the EU promote to impact on the cases? Eg.
Carrot by supporting those actors inside the conflict (EU/EU member states
actors’ addreses) who can implement its form of governance/ indirect by
promoting democracy or by embracing conflict region to bring parties into mould
of EU structure etc

15. What impact has the EU had on the changes we observe in the case of Greece
as a member of the EU and how have these changes had an impact on the relation
between Greece and Turkey? (Europeanisation)

16. Do different institutions have a different effect on the transformation of border
conflicts? Why?

17. What are the underlying power relations in these communications?

18. Do conflicts actually escalate or de-escalate following EU involvement?
19. How would informants relate the impact of integration and association to the transformation of border conflicts?

20. Are EU actors looking out for any early warning signals for violence in each case? Have any specific early warning signals in any case study prompted the EU to react? How did the EU react? Why did the EU choose not to act?

21. Are informants conscious of their actions in the case studies/border conflict cases?

22. What can we make out of the EU as a multi-level organisation in relation to each conflict and how can we relate this back to the project’s conceptual framework?
Cited References


http://www.euborderconf.bham.ac.uk/publications/files/WP1Conceptualfwork.pdf
Birmingham: The University of Birmingham.


Available at:


