

# What a 'New European Security Deal' Could Mean for the South Caucasus

**Frederic Labarre und George Niculescu (Eds.)**

Study Group Information



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# What a 'New European Security Deal' Could Mean for the South Caucasus

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Regional Stability in the South Caucasus

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## Preface

*Frederic Labarre and George Niculescu*

Credits for the topic of this 17<sup>th</sup> Regional Stability in the South Caucasus Study Group (RSSC SG) workshop mostly go to Prof. h. c. Peter Schulze and George Niculescu for the arrangement of the panels. As the regional (South Caucasus) and Euro-Atlantic security relations show signs of fraying, hosting a workshop on a new European security architecture seemed urgent.

Usually, such initiatives are undertaken at high political levels, and usually follow bloody confrontation. To wit, the Congress of Vienna followed the Napoleonic Wars, and provided a modicum of European peace until the wars of German unification (which were followed by the Congress of Berlin). Similarly, the First and Second World Wars were followed by models of security organization that, whatever their faults and failings, required deeper levels of integration, and, correspondingly, greater abandonment of national sovereignty.

The end of the Cold War was supposed to usher in a “New World Order”, but it was anything but. The post-Cold War world was one of national and regional fragmentation, of conflict which stressed the existing (and unyielding) international order to its core. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was clear that the United Nations could no longer fulfil its mandate as originally designed, as the trail of failed peace missions demonstrated. We can be thankful that the Cold War was not more murderous than it was. Although inter-Superpower rivalry took place in the form of proxy Third-World conflict, had it been any otherwise, we would likely not be here to discuss the travails of the post-Cold War security environment. It must be acknowledged, however, that the Cold War *was* murderous to a significant extent, and this should have warranted a high-level interest in rebuilding the international security order. Alas, the existing institutions and remaining great powers were left to merely manage the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and their clientelist relations.

Instead, the task of proposing solutions to the evolving regional and Euro-Atlantic security order was left to academics and mid-level policy makers. In a litany of papers, debate raged as to whether the OSCE should be at the top of the Euro-Atlantic security pyramid, with NATO's forces occasionally borrowed to quell trouble in restive regions. Or should that be the role of the then newly-formed European Union? As the Western European Union (inheritor of the Brussels Treaty of 1948) was being merged into EU structures, the idea of an EU army made its way into academic debate.

It obviously found academic and bureaucratic resistance from an enlarging NATO, so that schemes about a "Combined Joint Task Force" operating in common between European NATO members and the EU could be called upon to manage crises... only to be dismissed. Others called for NATO to be the *de facto* UN army. Meanwhile, bureaucratic agendas from Brussels to Washington were being pushed, conveniently forgetting about Moscow (and other important capitals. In the context of the ensuing War on Terror, Ankara comes to mind). The point is that the Cold War seems to have been insufficiently "warlike" to warrant its own version of a "Congress of Vienna" or a Dumbarton Oaks, or San Francisco conference.

We are left with the vestiges of neglect, and what may pass as European security relations schemes, such as the Meseberg Declaration of June 2010, discussed in these pages, appear as an after-thought, as a way to delay or mitigate what many saw as inevitable; that the crises of European security would have to be eventually discussed with Moscow, and would have to focus on geographic areas that are tenuously interesting to the EU, and even more so, to Washington.

The co-chairs of the RSSC SG, aided by the Dialogue of Civilizations' Research Institute, thought that they could use the track-two diplomacy appeal of the RSSC SG workshops to press the point of a new European security "deal" before a major great-power conflict made this obligatory. What follows is an exploration of what South Caucasus experts propose as a European security architecture. Should we build anew? Should we adapt existing institutions? Should we have a frank review of the international legal cannon to ensure that international law is respected, and not manipulated to suit the needs of ebbing great powers? The RSSC SG is the ideal place to consider such questions and topics, free from high-level interfer-

ence, but always respecting the wishes and needs of official diplomacy. In the end, we are producing these reports and recommendations for use in official contexts. We hope they can prove useful in the search for solutions.

The city of Minsk was chosen because of the correspondence of our topics to the Belarus' efforts towards peace. It is indeed the site of the OSCE Minsk Group discussions, and we wanted to celebrate the fact that Belarus was leading by example by offering its good offices in the service of peace in the South Caucasus. It was our first time in Minsk, and may we say, to many of us it won't be the last. In many ways the choice of Minsk seemed (but seemed only, for the reality was much different than our imaginings) fraught with challenges, but the grace of our hosts and the welcome we got in the city was such as to alleviate any qualms. Belarus is styling itself as a conference destination, and we can only applaud the result. The workshop was run to absolute perfection, and as you can see in these pages, the results were substantial. Of their relevance, we will let the readers judge, and we will maintain our hope that some of the ideas provided here can be picked up in further academic discourse, and in official circles.



## Acknowledgements

Work of this scope would not have been possible without the support of the Austrian National Defence Academy, the Dialogue of Civilization's Research Institute (DOC/RI) as well as the contribution of the authors and participants. Too often we neglect the graceful facilitation offered by those who work in the background. We therefore want to recognize here the contributions of Mrs. Veronika Fuchshuber, Raffaella Woller of the Austrian National Defence Academy, Elena Danilova of the Partnership for Peace Consortium, and Ekaterina Jarkov, of DOC/RI in making this event and the resulting Study Group Information (SGI) possible.

During the preparations of this workshop, we were apprised of the Republic of Belarus' strong interest in the continuation of the OSCE Minsk Group peace efforts. The co-chairs want to salute Belarus' far-sightedness in this respect, and their constructive diplomacy in the mediation and hopeful settlement of disputes in the South Caucasus.



## **Abstract**

After the end of the Cold War great powers and international organisations failed to build a “New World Order”. Today, the South Caucasus region, as an integral part of the older European order, is still significantly affected by the ongoing confrontation between Russia and the West and needs to define its role in the East-West relations and security environment, a challenge which usually should be the task of high political levels.

In its 17<sup>th</sup> Workshop on “What A ‘New European Security Deal’ Could Mean for the South Caucasus”, held in Minsk, Belarus, 18-21 April 2018, the “Regional Stability in the South Caucasus” Study Group as an academic platform attempted to find solutions for a “New Security Deal” which could collectively shape and regulate the Euro-Atlantic security architecture in the future.

The current SGI Publication therefore examines the need and feasibility of a new European security and the role of the South Caucasus region therein. The topics covered, moreover, range from strategies to overcome differences regarding the current and future security environment between Russia and the West to proposals of effective tools for regional integration and conflict resolution. The contributions give insights into the perspective of academics and experts from the South Caucasus as well as of international organisations and think tanks.





# Key Note Address: A new Cold War or a Road Map for Comprehensive and Collective European Security?<sup>1</sup>

*Peter W. Schulze*

## Missed Opportunities in a Rapidly Changing Environment

After the Cold War ended, prospects for cooperative security seemed favourable for a few years. However, in spite of various opportunities, a rather strange disparity or asymmetry evolved. While the political, normative, and socioeconomic goals of transformation were ubiquitously accepted, the idea of a European peace order vanished from the agenda. During the 1990s, a specific constellation of power materialised in the international system. What's more, Russia was pushed to the side lines. NATO's two rounds of eastward enlargement created an illusion of Western dominance and the West's capability to project stability eastwards. Once the Alliance started to extend its influence in *Europe-in-between*, i.e., the sphere between the European Union and post-Soviet Russia, such plans met Russian resistance and came to a halt.

The current international order is in transition, driven by the interplay of its main actors: Washington; Moscow; Beijing; and less significantly, the European Union. Other emerging powers are also challenging the present arrangement and if successful, they will eventually create a multipolar global order. The transient international order is currently characterised by chronic instability, regional and global turmoil, and a dramatic decline in its ease of governance. The central question is whether the emerging multipolar order can provide security and welfare for the international community. Or, will we see policies based on protracted narrow definitions of national interests, undermining opportunities for trust and confidence-building among the driving forces of the transformation process? Are we bound to

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this paper are based on an enhanced contribution titled 'A world in transition: Views from Russia, the US, and the EU on the challenges of multipolarity' in Schulze, Peter W. (Ed.): *Multipolarity: The promise of disharmony*. Forthcoming with Campus: Frankfurt 2018.

reawaken memories of the bipolar, Cold War era, with its proxy wars that instrumentalised domestic and regional conflicts for external purposes? The chances of reforming and democratising the United Nations are rather slim. Mutual trust and consensus over the essential challenges facing the world's chief international actors are missing.<sup>2</sup> Aggravated by inherently self-inflicted contradictions, the breakdown of trust and confidence – which had lasted since the demise of the USSR, despite severe challenges – has catapulted Europe in the throes of conflict.

The two decades of the new millennium have seen fundamental changes in the constellation of power among international actors. Those changes have affected Europe and will further determine opportunities to establish a peace and security order for the whole continent. Let me outline a few interlinked factors which have contributed to the present situation:

1. The hegemony of the US proved to be temporary. Predictions by both the CIA and the NIC still see the US as a major military actor in 2030, although on a weakened economic and financial basis. In order to act as a global hegemon in the future, Washington will be forced to safeguard existing alliances and/or seek new loyal alliance partners which can offer assistance and be ready for burden-sharing.
2. Russia has returned back in from the cold and begun to act as an international power-player again. State authority was restored after the chaotic decade of the 1990s. Moscow has formulated its foreign

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<sup>2</sup> Studies by the National Intelligence Council (NIC) on how the world will change in the coming decades and how the US position will be affected were presented in 2009 and 2012 to the Obama Administration. See National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds. Washington 2012. <[www.dni.gov/nic/globaltrends](http://www.dni.gov/nic/globaltrends)>, accessed on 7.6.2018. Also, with introductory remarks by C. Thomas Fingar, Chairman of NIC, see National Intelligence Council: Global Trends 2025, A Transformed World. Washington 2008. <[www.dni.gov/nic/NIC\\_2025\\_project.html](http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_2025_project.html)>, accessed on 7.6.2018.

In February 2017, a new Global Trends report was presented to the Trump Administration. National Intelligence Council: Global Trends: Paradox of Progress. Washington, 2017. <[www.dni.gov/nic/globaltrends](http://www.dni.gov/nic/globaltrends)>, accessed on 7.6.2018.

policy objectives based on a tripartite approach, seeking balanced, pragmatic, and cooperative relationships with Washington, Beijing, and Brussels. In 2008, Moscow initiated a debate on a *Pan-European Security Architecture*, in order to transcend the division of Europe into different zones of security. The debate linked domestic issues with international cooperation. The then Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev focused on the modernisation of Russia through innovation, investments, infrastructure, and governance. Modernisation was the catch word, and sounded, in a way, like the perestroika and glasnost of the Gorbachev era. But the Russian initiative did not generate any positive results among Western powers. A year later, Medvedev and Chancellor Merkel bilaterally agreed on a new peace and security project, formulating the *Meseberg Declaration* of June 2010. The Meseberg declaration tried to replicate, within EU-Russia relations, a pre-existing dialogue design between NATO and Russia. Just as with Medvedev's earlier initiative, NATO members refused to engage. Both projects were buried in commissions (e.g. Corfu) and taken off the agenda.

3. The failure to establish a conflict prevention and management centre in EU-Russia relations indicated a shift of paradigm in the EU's policy towards Russia and the EU's Eastern European neighbours, which occurred between 2008 and 2010. The EU changed from a cooperative to a confrontational approach. Two objectives represented the essence of the paradigm shift: firstly, to isolate Russia in Europe; and secondly, to undermine Berlin's dominant position of the formulation of the EU policy on Russia.
4. An anti-Russian coalition of Member States was formed, which needed to undermine Berlin's leadership of EU policy on Russia to be successful. From 1991 until 2009, the EU had borrowed a formula for its policy towards its Eastern European neighbours, which was very much linked to Germany's *Ostpolitik*. For nearly 20 years, Berlin's economic and political predominance in nearly all aspects of EU-Russia relations compensated for Brussels' lack of strategic orientation as to what to do with Russia. Pragmatic partnership and cooperation at all levels of economic, social, political, and cultural life was the core idea. This concept even served, miraculously, to

defuse the negative consequences of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008.

5. Reluctantly and without a solid consensus or a coherent strategy among Member States, the European Union was pushed into a geopolitical role by conflicts and consequences of state failure in its *near abroad*, i.e. in *Europe-in-between*, and in the Mediterranean area. Given the conflictual and unstable conditions in the area between Europe's two geopolitical power blocs, one can only speculate as to whether the presence of security institutions proposed by the Meseberg Declaration would have contained the dangers of confrontation and prevented the war in Ukraine.
6. Whether as a result of or reaction against EU activity, a notable shift in paradigm of Russian foreign policy had already begun, slowly, before 2012. The Kremlin simply lost hope it once had of being accepted as a partner by Western powers, and sought alternatives in Asia and among other emerging powers.
7. Shifts in the global economy and the emergence of growth centres like China, the G20, and the BRICS strengthened such expectations in Moscow. The policy shift towards a multipolar world order was even echoed by some EU Member States.
8. EU-Russia and NATO-Russia relations have become icy since 2012. The danger of a new Cold War is written on the wall. There is no comfort in the fact that the new Cold War differs fundamentally from the old one. Reciprocal political accusations have pushed aside central questions over Europe's role and position in the globalised world and whether there is a chance for pan-European security. At issue again is the division of Europe. This division could be real, or even desirable, for some governments.
9. The Ukraine conflict haunting Europe today is multi-layered. It is not only a military conflict about intervention, separatism, and annexation, but it also portrays signs of a social crisis of systemic dimension. More than two decades into transformation, the results of building a modern Ukrainian state, based on enduring economic

growth, political stability, checks and balances, legitimacy, the rule of law, public welfare, and a national identity for the people, are not very convincing. Ukraine's lingering systemic crisis has been brought to light by the catastrophic consequences of war, secessionist movements, political polarisation, and refugees, as well as by financial and economic decline. The war has simply deepened and sharpened underlying trends.

### **The Slim Chances of a Breakthrough in European Security**

Since 2016, several jarring game changers have troubled the international system, with consequences for European and global stability. In addition, Brexit has weakened the EU's main instrument of persuasion and soft power influence.<sup>3</sup> The victory of Emmanuel Macron in the French presidential elections and the landslide success of his *En Marche!* movement in the parliamentary elections was met with triumphant enthusiasm from political establishments in Brussels, Paris, and Berlin. But it remains to be seen if such an unquestionably positive development can offset the consequences of Brexit and European fatigue. A dynamic rebirth of leadership between Berlin and Paris could create a game-changer effect to kick-start the EU restructuring process, enhance its geopolitical influence, and promote a comprehensive order for peace, security, and welfare on the continent. However, the political unpredictability caused by the results of recent elections in Italy, Germany and the ousting of the Spanish government offers little optimism for advances in EU restructuring. Nor are there grounds to expect Brussels to formulate resolute policy towards Europe's eastern neighbours independently of US objectives.

Furthermore, it remains doubtful that Brussels will influence the shape of the emerging global order, given the present state of the European Union –

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<sup>3</sup> On one hand, Brexit will undoubtedly aggravate the complexity of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. But what is more serious, according to Hans Werner Sinn (2018), the former president of Munich's Ifo-Institute, is its accumulated economic and political consequences. The position of northern European Member States, particularly Germany's, is weakened if the economic weight of Brexit can be measured: the loss of the UK economy equates to an exodus of 19 Member States from the euro-zone.

fragmented by uncontrollable external challenges and home-grown problems which have been eroding EU solidarity since 2009. But there have been positive indications; amidst challenging external and internal trends, in June 2016, the European Union attempted to define its place and its responsibilities within the shifting context of the international system.<sup>4</sup> The *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe* strategy report is less a forecast or projection of what the future holds, and more a document of assertiveness and re-affirmation to stem the tide of draining internal cohesion and to unify the EU against external challenges.

What is missing from the report are instruments and conceptual frameworks capable of repairing internal fragmentation, regaining trust, building solid consensus for political action, and meeting external threats to the south (migration) and the east (Ukraine). It is doubtful that this global strategy will provide the EU with sovereignty and autonomy in security decision-making. US opposition to a stronger EU component within NATO reveals the futility of attempting to reconcile the historically subtle rivalry between NATO and EU objectives.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the formation of European foreign, security, and defence activity, apart from and distinct to NATO, has been difficult to realise.

As *Global Trends* has repeatedly stressed, the US will operate as a recognised regional hegemon within its sphere of influence. Brzezinski's characterisation of a power bloc consisting of the US and the EU remains a reality, resting on a dense network of militarily, political, and economic institutions, such as NATO, notably, as well as a plethora of agencies and NGOs

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<sup>4</sup> Council of the European Union: *Shared Vision, Common Action: a Stronger Europe, a Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and security Policy*. Brussels 2016. <[https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf)>, accessed on 7.6.2018.

<sup>5</sup> See also Brzezinski, *Zbigniew: The Choice; Global Domination or Global Leadership*. New York 2004, p. 95.

Brzezinski sees no signs of a political rivalry between the US and the EU. He views the EU as too bureaucratic and too disunited, and therefore incapable of matching the military-political strength of the US. For him, the EU resembles a giant economic conglomerate and he sarcastically adds, "...conglomerates do not have historic visions; they have tangible interests."

operating in from within and below constituent states. Obligated by its weakening global status, the US is doomed to follow a status-quo policy that aims to prevent its position from deteriorating further. Paradoxically, despite its unpredictability and confused foreign policy, the Trump Administration seems to have understood the writing on the wall. Declaring that the time of the free ride for European security is over, the Trump Administration has reversed the asymmetry between economic development and security which helped Western Europe to its favourable economic status from the early 1960s. The formula was simple and worked well for both sides: Europe delegated its security needs to the US, accepting its leadership; and the US accepted unrestricted economic development for Europe. The equation was questioned when the US slid into economic and financial troubles. Ever since, the call for burden-sharing has been on the agenda.

The sharing of military costs – 2 percent of GDP for defence – and trade restrictions, even a looming trade war, are the prices the EU must pay. This US-dominated power formula will work as long as the conflicts in Ukraine and Eastern Europe are not resolved. However, those conflicts are inter-linked with international issues. In this respect, they will remain unresolved as long as there is no consensus among major players about the diffusion of power and positions in the emerging new world order. For Europe, the primary actors in this conflict are Russia and the US. And due to the new hybrid form of this conflictual relationship, US-Russia relations cannot be expected to improve in the near future. If one follows Karaganov's line of argument, relations between Russia and the US "are worse than ever since the 1950s and the Cuban missile crisis."<sup>6</sup>

Europe and the EU are sandwiched between the conflicting major powers, Russia and the US. Even if a major restructuring of the EU gained momentum towards the creation of a homogeneous "Core Europe", able to define and project foreign and security priorities as well as to build defence capabilities, the EU would be a respected and recognised mediator of peaceful settlements rather than a major geopolitical actor, capable of globally signif-

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<sup>6</sup> Karaganov, Sergey: Pre-emptive Deterrence Strategy. In: Rossiyskaja Gazeta, 12.3.2018.



icant power projection. However, the present situation does not allow for such optimism. As the weakest link in the chain of competing great powers, the EU is not even in a position to choose its security and alliance options.

Referring to theories of neoclassical realism the weaker player in a given power constellation generally has three options. Firstly, to bandwagon with the most powerful state. This might be the US. Secondly, to remain neutral, which is the best option and guarantees a higher profile in terms of sovereignty. Thirdly, to establish a counter-balance against the hegemon with other states. Momentarily, this option has been pursued in an unconvincing manner, because resistance from pro-Atlanticist Member States in the EU is high. The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework, the renewed debate on Core Europe, and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) point in a hopeful direction, but the realisation of such projects implies an extremely difficult and slow process. Nevertheless, Berlin should be more active in efforts to approach member States to put the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Russia on the table again.

Paradoxically, the present policy of the Trump Administration could speed up both PESCO and the CSDP. The peculiar and unpredictable behaviour of the US government has unintentionally opened a window of opportunity for Brussels to define *European* interests as distinct from those of Washington. The Trump Administration has shied away from direct military intervention, a process which had already begun under Obama. Instead, it uses economic sanctions combined with legal action as potent soft power instruments to control alliances. Allied partners which cross lines with respect to recognised enemies are economically and politically punished. This policy makes sense for a former hegemon that cannot maintain its global position any longer by purely military means. However, it undermines the power equation that has lasted since the beginning of the Cold War, between the US and Europe at every stage of European integration. The US was politically and militarily the accepted and undisputed guarantor of European security: the leader of the Western block institutionalised in NATO. Given the nuclear security guarantees to the European member states, the EEC and then the EU were able to develop economic soft power capabilities without major economic and political dissent from the US.

The Trump Administration has dramatically changed the *security for economic recovery and growth* equation which kept the Atlantic community so closely intertwined for decades. The consequences of the sanction regimes against Russia and Iran, in combination with the cancellation of various treaties, are affecting the core of the Atlantic relationship. The US-EU power bloc is still in operation but the links are getting weaker. There are chances for the political emancipation of Europe from Washington but it will be a long and difficult process that requires collective leadership and robust consensus among the EU's main member States. Both factors are missing. Neither Berlin nor Paris are in any condition to provide leadership and a vision for a common European security agenda. Furthermore, as long as the Ukraine crisis is not resolved in a satisfactory and face-saving way for both sides, any attempt to balance against unpredictable US moves, politically, economically, and militarily, would be sternly resisted by the pro-Atlanticist camp within the EU.

### **Recommendations for the Reconstitution of a Common Security Dialogue**

There is no illusion in Moscow that Germany will veer off the NATO course and hunt for a new dominant role in formulating the EU's policy towards Russia and Eastern Europe. The former role of German *Ostpolitik* is still a potent instrument for understanding and bridging gaps, but the political leadership is missing and there is no indication from the new coalition government that Berlin is willing to embark on such a risky path. Widespread attempts to hide behind formulas of the past – such as that there is no security in Europe without or in opposition to Russia, or that of a possible Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok – do not have any practical meaning despite their desirable principles. As Andrey Kortunov piercingly points out, “to cut it short, there are absolutely no reasons to hope for any breakthrough in German-Russian relations just because a new coalition government has finally arrived in Berlin.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kortunov, Andrey: Elements of a road map for European security (19.4.2018). <<https://doc-research.org/de/2018/04/elements-road-map-european-security/>>, accessed on 7.6.2018.

However, Kortunov also addresses the contradiction Berlin faces with a policy hiding under the slogan that there should be no special relationship between Russia and Germany. In addition, the German mantra is ubiquitous: Germany's foreign policy, especially towards Russia, must be embedded within a European consensual framework. However, Berlin can neither deny nor escape from its centuries-old historic relationship and position with respect to Russia. Even during the Cold War era, it was Bonn that began the process of normalisation and the undoing of the division of Europe, which finally ended with Germany's reunification. The OSCE was the crucial instrument in bringing down the wall and laying to rest, at least for some time, the Cold War ghosts. Given that legacy, there is no other country more interested in stability, security, and peace in Europe, including Russia. Moscow may have lost Germany for the moment, but the cultural, historical, and political ties may prove more potent in future and be able to overcome the present stalemate.

The central vehicle for promoting a restoration of the Berlin-Moscow relationship is the resolution of the Ukraine crisis. Let me propose a few ideas; firstly, Germany should take a more active position on Ukraine along the lines already laid out by the former foreign ministers, Steinmeier and Gabriel. It is very unlikely, given the desolate relationship between the US and Russia, that any positive initiative will come from either Washington or Moscow. As long as the Ukraine conflict is still boiling, the US has enough leverage to contain and even prevent any EU Member State from leaving the sanctions regime. However, the US would not be able to act against Berlin if Berlin succeeded in forming a coalition to gradually eliminate the regime. In the name of protecting *European* interests and sovereignty, Berlin's formation of such a coalition is a real necessity.

Secondly, linked with this move, Berlin should bring its energy to bear towards the reconstruction of the defunct PCA between the EU and Russia. A starting point could be the four dimensions of the 2003 St. Petersburg agreement and a decision to liberalise the visa regime.

Thirdly, Berlin should look beyond the malfunctioning NATO-Russia Council, either by working towards meetings and operational cooperation on a permanent and sustainable basis and/or by enhancing the NATO-Russia Council's relevance by creating an attached or incorporated crisis-

management group to deal with possible future threats and challenges. Closer sharing of information and on-the-spot cooperation between NATO and the CSTO could be an objective worth striving for.

Fourthly, Berlin should throw its economic interests into the ring in order to establish a common basis for economic cooperation between the EU and the EEU. Here again, a modified PESCO related to economic cooperation between interested member states could break the ice.

Fifthly, Berlin should put its political weight behind the enforcement of the Minsk II agreement. One-sided accusations against Moscow are counter-productive; restarting serious negotiations about UN peacekeeping forces in the Donbass region to protect civilians and curb acts of war on both sides would be a big step towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Berlin must use a carrot and stick policy against Kiev if necessary. In this context, the role of the OSCE must be strengthened.

Sixthly, what have almost been lost in the debate are the treaties and arrangements on disarmament from the Cold War era. Blocking any attempts at a new arms race in Europe and preserving the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty should be particular priorities. The preservation of the treaty is of essential concern for Europe.

Paradoxically, there is little doubt that any of the aforementioned ideas are in Germany's interests and would be able to contribute, if pursued, towards a thawing of the clearly antagonistic narratives that currently block the way forwards. But the crucial question for Europe is whether – even besides political leadership and consensus-building activities – the continent possesses the vision and the endurance to shape a secure future.



**PART I:  
ASSESSMENTS AND DIAGNOSES  
ON EUROPEAN SECURITY  
AND REGIONAL STABILITY  
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS**



## **NATO and CSTO in the Caucasus: Evolving Collision and Potential Engagement**

*Eduard Abrahamyan*

The outset of the political crisis between former partners, Russia and the Western key powers, over Ukraine in 2014 heralded the era of a contested security environment and a competitive international order. In response to these tendencies, the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the resistant and durable politico-military alliance of the Euro-Atlantic hemisphere undertook an essential transformation on institutional, political and military dimensions. The alliance staged a fundamental adaptation thinking to revitalize the elements of its *raison d'être*, upgrade the predominantly outwards looking agenda with the imperative to reinforce its collective defense capabilities in the face of resurgent Russia's increasing assertiveness vis-à-vis its near abroad.

The combination of such a multidimensional paradigmatic evolution of the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian post-Cold War order into a contested security environment, given the precipitating deterioration of NATO-Russia relations, left a serious set of implications on the South Caucasus politico-military context. A case in point: the unprecedented escalation of tensions between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces throughout the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the profound process of re-evaluation of the foreign-policy priorities of the three regional countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, including their long-standing partnership with NATO.

The overall impact of the cardinal shift in international relations and the security environment in conjunction with the progressive adoption of Cold War pattern rhetoric and set of actions between contesters evoked certain risks that the South Caucasus region could be gradually embroiled into the dynamics attributive to a new cold war order.

However, it is worth mentioning that against the backdrop of the wider analytical discourse on changes of power projection perceptions and strategic adaptation of military security doctrines or concepts in NATO, the



United States, Russia or post-soviet individual countries there is one important institution whose adaptation to the renewed security environment often fades from sight of Eurasian observers. It is the Russia-engineered and substantially funded post-soviet military bloc named the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Even though this Eurasian Russia-dominated alliance besets by virtually insurmountable vulnerabilities, it nevertheless is considered as a critical instrument aimed to have the Russian politico-military agenda prevailing in the post-Soviet Eurasia strategic space.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, this paper aims to emphasise the features of perception shifts currently underway in the Russia-dominated CSTO framework against NATO's essential adaptation, in the context of the implications on the South Caucasus dynamics. Another objective of this assessment is to reinvigorate the discourse on the possibility of NATO and CSTO partnership-oriented engagement derived from their virtually shared mission to deliver security and stability for regions of greater Eurasia.

### **Rationalizing Russia's Interest to Instrumentalize the CSTO**

The CSTO, while being officially inaugurated in 2002, consisted of the virtually reorganized and viably operationalized version of the Collective Security Treaty, signed in 1992 in Tashkent, within the framework of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). CSTO inherited from the CST its legal framework, core tasks and principles framing the background pillars, which served as a catalyst for several former Soviet republics to align their security interests. It is worth to note that, in contrast to currently operating CSTO, the CST that came into force since 1994, considered five years conditional extensions by each member, as enshrined in Article 11 of the treaty. As such, only five out of nine desired to maintain their adherence effective in 1999, whereas Azerbaijan and Georgia, and later Uzbekistan as well refused to prolong their participation under CST. Hence, at the tenth anniversary of the treaty, in October 2002, the remaining countries: Armenia,

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<sup>1</sup> Bescotti, Elia: Collective Security Treaty Organization and its limits on integration, Analytical Media "Eurasian Studies", 2018. <<http://greater-europe.org/archives/3965>>. Accessed on 21.03.2018.

Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan opted for strengthening their ties within a security-related integration sphere by staging the establishment of the CSTO phenomenon, which is in place to date.

Overall, speaking of the key rationale for creation of CSTO, it was not about the common sense of values or shared geopolitical dividends, but first and foremost about avoiding clashes between the newly independent entities against the backdrop of Russia as the critical stabilizing factor in the Caucasus and in Central Asia. As former CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha and the incumbent successor Yuri Khachaturov had to repeatedly admit, while the essential pillar of the North-Atlantic alliance is the sense of common values and principles of the nations in the West, the uniting factor forming the CSTO was predominantly Russia and its tendency to prevail in her traditional domain.<sup>2</sup>

Today's CSTO is largely encompassing three operational strategic directions including the Eastern European theatre, and the Caucasus and Central Asia operative dimensions. The functioning of the CSTO in the Western (or the Eastern-European) strategic direction is extensively anchored in the Russia-Belarus bilateral nexus legitimated by the framework formed in 1996 by the establishment of the State Union of Russia and Belarus. The large-scale two-partite military drills conducted on an annual basis dubbed "Zapad" ("West" in Russian) that traditionally encompassed the entire western operative strategic flank of CSTO embodies Russia-Belarus mutual commitments in defense and security under bilateral and multilateral levels.

In the Caucasian operative direction, the sustained functionality of CSTO is heavily resting on the strategic alliance between Russia and Armenia under a set of bilateral strategic documents ranging from accords of mutual support and joint border guards to the agreement that regulates the deployment of the formidable 102<sup>nd</sup> military base on the Armenian soil. Armenia, as Russia's full-fledged ally, combining Russian military presence with its own membership in CSTO, yields a strategic bridgehead for Moscow, critically rendering the latter's politico-military dominance upon the South

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<sup>2</sup> CSTO General Secretary Yuri Khachaturov's speech 19 October, 2017. <<https://youtu.be/SIIzEO5iO7g>>. Accessed on 11.03.2018.

Caucasus prevail. These strategic pillars rest as cornerstones for the strategic relations between Armenia and Russia. Additionally, with the raise of contested security environment the outlined instruments were buttressed by the creation of so-called joint military assets and forces such as the Joint Air Defense system and the United Armenian-Russian Battle Group encompassing the Russian 102<sup>nd</sup> Military base and Armenian 4<sup>th</sup> Army Corps forces integrated into the structure of Russia's Southern Military District's operative command. As such, Armenia's strategic role in the eyes of Russia can hardly be overemphasized as its security perceptions and priorities pre-determine Russia's preponderance in the South Caucasus whereby the latter exerts direct influence on the foreign-policy making and the strategic imperatives of all three Caucasian republics. These assets illustrate the main functional and operational tools the CSTO is relying upon in its Caucasus operative direction.

For years, the CSTO sought the acknowledgement from the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as military instrument for security provision, crisis management and peacekeeping missions for post-Soviet Eurasia.<sup>3</sup> This strategic intention was reinforced by the traditional Yeltsin era (1991-1999) Russian approach according to which the Russian officials repeatedly proposed to the United Nations to grant the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with the status of an international body which conferred an exclusive right over peacekeeping responsibilities on Russia's conflicting/destabilized near neighbourhood.<sup>4</sup>

This was especially symptomatic taking into account that across the political spectrum during the 1990s the Russian politicians increasingly tended to pursue Russia's 'special guarantor' status in containing local wars and protecting 'Russians' (ethnic and citizens) in the former USSR space. Relying on the CIS (subsequently on CSTO) instrument to advance those interests, initially enshrined in a 1995 Boris Yeltsin's presidential edict, Moscow appeared to draw a sphere of influence and responsibility for peace and sta-

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<sup>3</sup> Yurgens, Igor (Ed.). CSTO: Responsible Security (ОДКБ: Ответственная Безопасность). Moscow 2011. pp. 31-32. (In Russian).

<sup>4</sup> Sokolskiy Richard/ Charlick-Paley Tanya: NATO and Caspian Security: A Mission Too Far? Rand Corporation – Washington DC, 1999. pp. 26-27.

bility, which by no means should have been fulfilled to the detriment of sustained democratisation and sovereignty of post-soviet neighbours.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the integration of CIS with the security component of Collective Security Treaty (subsequently CSTO) under Russian domination led to attempts to utilize it as politico-economic and military leverage to subordinate the interests of independent post-Soviet states in the Black-Sea-Caucasus and in Central Asia to Russia's revisionism-oriented interests.

The Russian plans for the CSTO to shoulder international commitments to foster security and preserve stability upon “the zone of its responsibility” were vocal in the context of the United Nations and the OSCE, since its emergence as military alliance. During the OSCE Astana summit of 2010, the CSTO members concertedly came up with conceptualized proposals to reform the OSCE in a sense to enhance the decision-making mechanisms.

It also recommended defining the security responsibilities and peacekeeping functions of military organizations to deal with terrorist threats and unresolved conflicts in the regions they dominate.<sup>6</sup> Although the other members of the OSCE denied the proposed package of reforms, mostly given to sensitivities over Georgia and Moldova, it contained a set of rather sober suggestions to transform the institutions of the “slow-moving” organization into more adequate ways to address the whole spectrum of emerging challenges effectively. Four years on, in November 2017, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov hosting OSCE Secretary General Thomas Geringer stated that the package of reforms once designed by CSTO partners was adapted and submitted again for wider format discussion.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kremlin.ru, Presidential Edict adopted in 19.09.1995 under № 940, “On approval of strategic course of Russian Federation with counties – members of the Commonwealth of Independent States”. <<http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/8307>>. Accessed on 14.03.2018.

<sup>6</sup> Yurgens, Igor (Ed.). CSTO: Responsible Security (ОДКБ: Ответственная Безопасность). Moscow 2011. pp. 68-71. (In Russian).

<sup>7</sup> RIA Novosti, Предложения России и ОДКБ по реформе ОБСЕ остаются в силе, заявил Лавров, 03.11.2017. <<https://ria.ru/world/20171103/1508144608.html>>. Accessed on 01.03.2018.

In light of the unfolding global fight against terrorism launched by NATO in response to the 9/11 attacks, in 2002, the CSTO reorganized itself to seek co-operation with NATO on an institution-to-institution level. This quest was however doomed to failure insofar as the North-Atlantic Alliance has hitherto been deliberately eschewed any interaction with other collective defense-oriented organizations, while preferring to foster relations with CSTO members within the well-established partnership frameworks instead. To forestall, at the height of NATO's institutional post-Cold War transformation, the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program launched in 1994 aimed at forging an authentic security relationship with any OSCE non-NATO member, prefigured the raise of relatively new paradigm of inclusive partnerships. Over the years, the cornerstone idea of the PfP and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), established in 1997, as a forum guiding PfP activities and as a multilateral consultative framework on defense and security matters, was the enhancement of security and common values in the Euro-Atlantic area. At present, NATO enjoys deeply rooted comprehensive partnerships with all CSTO member states albeit at different levels, based upon those imperatives. Some of them, Armenia and Kazakhstan, for instance, enjoy a broader format of partnership with NATO, with Armenia unwaveringly supporting the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and Kazakhstan involved in initiatives such as Planning and Review Process since 2002 and Individual Partnership Action Plan from 2005.

Given the sustained cooperation with the CSTO member states, the North-Atlantic Alliance never referred in its official documents to, or highlights, the existence of the CSTO as a security-oriented structure.

Even back in the Cold War era, when the predominantly pro-Western and anti-Communist CENTO and SEATO (Central Treaty Organizations and the Southeast Asian) were established, NATO avoided formalizing the ties with them on an organization-to-organization basis.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the CSTO is acknowledged neither as a counterpart alliance nor as a peer-competitor by NATO, which considered this organization as resurgent

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<sup>8</sup> Herd, Graeme/ Kriendler, John (Eds): *Understanding NATO in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Routledge 2013. pp. 16-33.

Russia's critically instrumentalized vehicle to entrench Moscow's politico-military preponderance upon the post-Soviet Eurasia. Hence referring to the belief nowadays prevalent in the West, any recognition of cooperative engagement with the CSTO on an equal basis may bring legitimization of Russia's long-standing sense that it is entitled to project its sphere of privileged interests. To put simply, it is believed that this move would "seal" Moscow's asserted zone of privileged interests in the Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>9</sup> As the General Secretary Colonel General Khachaturov mentioned in Serbia in 2017, "We requested recognition of CSTO by NATO two times since the former was established as international organization. So far, we received no answer from NATO hence we are here [in Belgrade] to make your voice more hearable for Europe".<sup>10</sup> By highlighting this, it nevertheless does not preclude the possibility that a NATO member state can cooperate with the CSTO over specific issues of mutual interest. Although, the structural constraint of the North-Atlantic Alliance to essentially focus on interaction with individual countries rather than organizations has been the main impediment on the way to establish organization-to-organization contacts. The objective difficulties on NATO's engagement with the CSTO are attributable to additional factors largely related to the issue of political expediency of some NATO members especially the United States. Some politicians and foreign policy influencers in Washington DC, thanks to belligerent claims of some representatives of Kremlin elite, continue to see in CSTO Moscow's covered intention to foster new Warsaw Pact to oppose the Western order.<sup>11</sup>

At the declaratory level, Moscow's aspiration to attain recognition of the CSTO as a viable military alliance akin to NATO is nothing new. For years, Russian senior officials have expressed the view that the borders of the

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<sup>9</sup> Trenin, Dmitri: NATO and Russia: Sobering Thoughts and Practical Suggestions. NATO Review 2007. <[https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/partnerships\\_old\\_new/NATO\\_Russia\\_practical/EN/index.htm](https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/partnerships_old_new/NATO_Russia_practical/EN/index.htm)>. Accessed on 03.06.2018.

<sup>10</sup> CSTO General Secretary Yuri Khachaturov's speech 19 October, 2017. <<https://youtu.be/SIIzEO5iO7g>>. Accessed on 18.03.2018.

<sup>11</sup> Weinstein, Adam: Russian Phoenix: The Collective Security Treaty Organization, The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations, (8) 2007, p. 167.

Caucasus and Central Asia are Russia's borders as well.<sup>12</sup> They argued that, given the point that these regions invariably face a broad spectrum of threats including transnational ones, Moscow had to retain a tangible military presence to reassure the security for the rest of post-Soviet Eurasia. Thus, the forward defense strategy was built upon the belief that the defense of Russia's borders started at the CSTO edges in Caucasus and Central Asia. This logic explains why Moscow is sensitive to political developments in countries that are part of the CSTO.

In reality, Moscow's primary agenda with the CSTO was merely to "fill the vacuum" left by the crumbling of the Soviet empire in part to serve as a reliable counterweight to anticipated Western and Chinese influence. With about 15 years passed, it however remains unclear to what extent and in what strategic milieu Russia needs the CSTO to enhance its foreign policy. Perhaps, presenting Serbia and Afghanistan as observers to the CSTO Moscow perceived the coalition as a mechanism to extend its reach beyond the post-Soviet domain. Although there is no evidence that this idea was shared by Russia's formal allies. To substantiate, Kazakhstan implicitly denies any prospect to enlarge the CSTO westwards while Armenia in 2016 vetoed Pakistan's request to gain observer status due to the latter's growing alignment with Azerbaijan.<sup>13</sup> Such reluctance of the states to tailor the national interests with Russia's priorities constitutes no wider space for manoeuvring, which consequently renders Russia rather intolerant to different claims of members. This in political terms "static" condition might lead to the point, where the CSTO could lose its top relevancy role for the Russian foreign policy making.

As of today, the viability of the CSTO, its often-questioned credibility, and its relevance to Eurasia's shifting security environment remain highly uncertain. Regardless of whether Russia's military deployment in Central Asia plays a stabilizing role in the short term, the membership and sustained

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<sup>12</sup> Abrahamyan, Eduard: Russia Mulls new Role for its Military Bloc, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2017. <<https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/12/russia-mulls-new-role-post-soviet-military-bloc/>>. Accessed 11.05.2018.

<sup>13</sup> Abrahamyan, Eduard: Armenia-Pakistan Friction has Intensified, The Jamestown Foundation 2016, <<https://jamestown.org/program/pakistan-armenia-friction-intensified/>>. Accessed on 26.04.2017.

institutional integration of Armenia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan emboldens Moscow to further capitalize on its neighbours' interests and benefit from their security vulnerabilities. Therefore, the development of a formula on devising on what aspects the CSTO and NATO might interact as international entities liable for security and stability of wider Eurasia is of increasing importance. Such an agenda can be deliberately generated within the framework of the OSCE in an effort, on one hand, to defuse tensions between NATO and the CSTO, and, on the other, to stimulate any forms of contact without the necessity to recognize one another as peer alliances. However, the intensifying political divergences and the expanding confrontation between Russia and the West stimulated a certain trajectory of revisions in the system of CSTO's strategic threats and risks evaluation. This dynamic still evolves in compliance with the contesting environment and order. As it happens, this factor makes the prospect for NATO-CSTO engagement even more elusive.

### **The Character of NATO in the CSTO Strategic Concept**

Since 2014 the strive to re-establish the perception of Russia's revisionist vision into the Russian military discourse was univocal and is considerably based on the legitimation of President Vladimir Putin's policy on Ukraine by legal decisions, strategic documents' revision and adoption. Against the backdrop of augmenting the reciprocal antagonization between the West and Russia, the legitimation of Putin's policy towards Ukraine and NATO did not leave the evolution of CSTO's strategic documents unaffected.

In this aspect, it is of importance to underscore that addressing the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Russia's president has echoed the same rationale concerning Ukraine crisis under the special address in 18 March 2014, known as the "Crimean speech". Declaring the Crimea's annexation as an "imposed necessity" Putin laid out that

we have already heard declarations from Kyiv about Ukraine soon joining NATO. What would this have meant for Crimea and Sevastopol in the future? It would have meant that NATO's navy would be right there in this city of Russia's military glory, and this would create not an illusory but a perfectly real threat to the whole of southern Russia. These are things that could have become reality were it not for



the choice the Crimean people made, and I want to say thank you to them for this.<sup>14</sup>

Within the security discourse defined by Vladimir Putin, the alleged NATO threat is so significant that it demands considerable violations of international law in the name of the security of the Russian state. Therefore, this narrative was echoed in the revised Military Doctrine adopted following Vladimir Putin's speech. In here, the "NATO military threat" became more palpable:

The main external military risks are: build-up of the power potential of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization and vesting NATO with global functions carried out in violation of the rules of international law, bringing the military infrastructure of NATO member countries near the borders of the Russian Federation, including by further expansion of the alliance.<sup>15</sup>

This type of interpretation of the aims and function of the North-Atlantic alliance transferred into the Strategy of the CSTO for 2025, adopted in Yerevan, on 14 October 2016. It reflected the same discourse and vision of NATO's reactive measures applied or precipitated following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. This point albeit without mentioning NATO proper is enshrined in the CSTO document within the frames of "Modern challenges". The build-up or the power potential, or preposition of a new military grouping as well as the establishment of new military infrastructure in contiguous territories with the zone of responsibility of CSTO are identified as threats to the CSTO countries. Referring to NATO's anti-missile defense system the CSTO strategic concept identifies it as a military threat to its members' security though avoiding to address it – thereby, likely, leaving scope for potential engagement with NATO. That point of strategy is particularly making clear that

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<sup>14</sup> Kremlin: Address by the President of the Russian Federation. March 18. 2014. <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>>. Accessed on 06.03.2018.

<sup>15</sup> RIA Novosti: New Military Doctrine: NATO Enlargement is one of the Main Threats. January 26, 2014. <[https://ria.ru/defense\\_safety/20141226/1040315189.html](https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20141226/1040315189.html)>. Accessed on 11.03.2018.

unilaterally build-up of global means of anti- missile defense systems by one or a group of states without consideration of the legitimate interests of other countries and without provision of guarantees<sup>16</sup>

are deemed by the CSTO as military threat.

Apart from clarifying the strategic nature of the NATO threat, the new Russian doctrine included a longer list of domestic threats, with first and foremost, a foreign threat being the following: “establishment of regimes, whose policies threaten the interests of Russian Federation in the states contiguous with the Russian Federation including by overthrowing legitimate state administration bodies”. This point paved the way for legitimizing the intervention and interference into the domestic processes of the states that Putin’s administration believes shape its “near abroad”.

In the case of the CSTO, is it important to note the fact that the same pattern of threat has been identified under the latter’s Strategy that is in place since 2016. It particularly outlined the threat: “implementation of so called coloured revolutions technologies and hybrid warfare”.

By formulating security perceptions under such criteria permits Russia to exploit the CSTO instruments like its strategy to legitimate the right of the Eurasian Alliance to intervene either as peacekeeping or as pacifying force into the areas of Russia’s near abroad that the CSTO identifies as its “zone of responsibility”. This nuance shapes the concept of Russia’s “exclusive prerogative” of intervention in the “zone of CSTO responsibility” under which the Caucasus is part of. Hence, regardless the desire of allies to avoid putting the CSTO on a collision course with NATO in tailoring it to Russia’s zero-sum logic, the Eurasian coalition in one way or another inevitably constitutes a part of the current Russia-West standoff.

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<sup>16</sup> Strategy for Collective Security of Collective Security Treaty Organization for the period of until 2025. Approved on 14 October 2016. <[http://odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=8382](http://odkb-csto.org/documents/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=8382)> . Accessed on 01.05.2018.

## Understanding the Contradicting Approaches of NATO and the CSTO: Consensus versus Compromise

At first glance, the security perceptions and regional stability-oriented efforts get the chief priorities of NATO and the CSTO more or less coincided, making the potential scope of interaction conceivable. Nonetheless, there are a range of core principles rendering NATO and the CSTO incompatible at the level of perceptions concerning the institutional functionality and the conceptual basis of decision-making philosophy.

In this context, NATO is a well-known consensus-based organization, whereas the *raison d'être* and *modus operandi* of the CSTO are tightly bounded with Russia-dominated hierarchism, meanwhile being morally predicated on the idea of compromise throughout the decision-making process.

The key to understanding why this is the case is the issue of consensus long-practiced in NATO as the organization's critical driving force and mechanism through which the decisions within the Alliance are made. The essence of consensus in NATO implies that the stance of every single ally counts no matter of its territorial size and political, military weight. Put simply, the NATO consensus means no decision is possible unless all allied states unanimously agreed. This decision making system limits the actions of the Alliance to only those issues on which consensus can be achieved, and aligns national interests only in those areas where there is no essential loss of sovereignty and no threat to Allies' national interests.

In contrast, the compromise-based approach on issues of national security of the CSTO only stokes up resentment and bad blood for the future as it was vividly revealed during the 2016 April fighting between the Armenian and Azerbaijani forces that flared up across the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh. At that time, Armenia's formal allies shaping the CSTO phenomenon, such as Kazakhstan and Belarus following their national interest to prioritise close strategic ties with Azerbaijan, Armenia's enduring con-tester, unequivocally voiced political solidarity with the former, at the expense of their ally's national interests. This incident can be characterised as outright refusal at that juncture to pursue compromise in favour of an ally by neglecting one's own national interests. In addition, the CSTO philosophy often illustrates that it is in fact even feasible to mark compromise up-

on the issues placed out of the CSTO sphere of direct responsibility. The egregious example of this represents the joint CSTO statement condemning the US-led bombing of Syria in April 2018, towards which the CSTO has no formal obligations.<sup>17</sup> Such a solidarity has never been possible for the time-being in the spectrum of Armenia-Azerbaijan tensions – not to mention any released joint statement expressing concern over the Armenia-Azerbaijan border hostilities which routinely occurred since 2010. Even when the leadership of Azerbaijan unambiguously claims territorial pretensions vis-à-vis Armenia’s own territory the CSTO along with the leaders of member states invariably remained silent inasmuch as considering it not through the prism of Armenia’s security threat but of the localized Karabakh conflict context.<sup>18</sup>

The additional example of the CSTO avoiding to apply the “engagement/involvement” scenario was clearly a characteristic of the ethnic clashes unleashed back in June 2010 between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz shortly after the Kyrgyz revolution of May 2010.

The outlined examples came to buttress to some extent the assumption in the West that the CSTO is widely considered as Russia in the eyes of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, which is consistently treated as Supreme Partner, who shoulder a major share of security thereby has legitimate right to steer the coalition. This privilege in effect emboldened Kremlin’s zero-sum strategy vis-à-vis its near neighbourhood, where democratic transformations, state institutions resilience and search for strong sovereignty somewhat harbour concerns of the satellites’ presumable U-turn. This apprehension in Moscow appears to be indicative in the specific case of Armenia’s ‘Velvet Revolution’ that ended up with regime change – loyal to Moscow although it appeared to Kremlin as a highly suspicious political team. Notwithstanding the main objective to restore Armenia’s democratic agenda to fight the oligarchic system married with politics and monop-

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<sup>17</sup> TASS Information Agency, The CSTO Statement on the US Syria strikes, 14 April, 2018. (Russian) <<http://tass.ru/politika/5127090>>. Accessed 14.04.2018.

<sup>18</sup> Sidorov, Anatoliy. ОДКБ не сможет поддержать Карабах в случае войны. RusArmInfo 2018. <<https://rusarminfo.ru/2018/03/06/odkb-ne-smozhet-podderzhat-karabax-v-sluchae-vojny-sidorov/>>. Accessed 01.06.2018.

lized economy, the Armenian upheaval in April-May 2018 was essentially inwards looking, without any support from the West.

To put it differently, the CSTO is a compromise organisation, one in which member states accept a certain loss of sovereignty as they align their national interests in all areas possible because they on one hand feel vulnerable facing security threats on their own, and on the other – have no intention to share the security burden for the other formal ally. This factor makes CSTO member states consistently eager to include national interests' issues in their CSTO agenda, and it is what has prevented this organization from evolving into an effective, powerful defence element designed to protect the security of sovereignties. The rationale behind these circumstances is that the profiles of Caucasus and Central Asia in the wider spectrum of risks and threats are entirely different, which compounded with contrasting political cultures and priorities that within the context of one collective security organization make the security perceptions and political visions of Armenians, Belarusians, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Russians and Kyrgyz's profoundly different.

Moreover, the philosophy of compromise in the CSTO decision making has much to do with one ally's politico-military weight and the extent of compromise vis-à-vis the ally within this framework is proportionate to the latter's international and inner-CSTO politico-military weight. Russia's posture towards Armenia through the prism of its lingering rivalry with Azerbaijan openly represents the nuance of compromise proportionality. As a matter of fact, amidst the unprecedented escalation of tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh in April 2016 Moscow's position was neutral without any political support to its ally Armenia as the compromise was in that case linear to Armenia's political weight: Russia made the decision not to supply advanced arms and equipment to Azerbaijan, in the quantities it did from 2010 until April 2016.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kosachev, Konstantin: Why does Russia Reconsider Arms Procurements to Azerbaijan. 22 March, 2018. <<https://news.rambler.ru/caucasus/39420056-pochemu-rossiya-sokraschaet-postavki-oruzhiya-azerbaydzhanu/>>. Accessed on 11.05.2018.

Referring to the structural philosophy of hierarchism prevalent in the CSTO, it is understood that Russia here traditionally plays the role of the Supreme Partner for the post-Soviet counties which reside in this military alliance.

Ultimately, the bright difference between the CSTO and NATO is that the latter proved most successful and vital for Euro-Atlantic security politico-military organization, while its peer-counterpart is purely military entity, clearly weak in cohesion and insolvency in possessing conscious sense of a determined coalition of sovereignties. Instead, the political levers are almost entirely galvanized in Moscow's hands making the CSTO something similar to a "club of retired Soviet-era generals". In short, whereas NATO is a civilian-led politico-military alliance, albeit one whose main tool is armed force, the CSTO is a military coalition lead by a Colonel General. It critically depends on the political decision of national governments that often diverge or are even at odds to one another. In general, setting aside expected material benefits from Russia in terms of national defense/security boost, the member states of the CSTO have less in common, and their national priorities are often incompatible, as it was the case with Uzbekistan or most recently, with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan consistently providing arms to Azerbaijan.

Broadly speaking, dealing with the Russia-designed CSTO, it is of importance to bear in mind that it is not an organization in the sense many think about organizations committed to collective defense. It is primarily a collection of countries; each generates and pursues its own foreign policy that occasionally might contradict one another.

Nevertheless, setting all type of shortfalls of this Eurasian Alliance aside, it is clear that at times of evolving international turbulence the interaction between NATO and the CSTO is of increasing necessity. Regardless of mutual benefits the engagement might provide to the sides in interactive detection, evaluation and assessment of transnational risks and threats, the establishment of contacts with the CSTO without the latter's official recognition as an international body, may make Russian concerns, ambitions and claims more comprehensible. It may therefore sound somewhat paradoxically to assume that even the low-profile interaction with Russia-led CSTO framework may render Russia more predictable and thus in

some sense controlled in terms of its power projection and security perceptions.

It is obvious that for their mutual relationship to improve and being put on a rational track, both sides Russia and the West have no alternative but to exert significant efforts. NATO-CSTO interoperability can be tested in joint peacekeeping operations in areas of the former Soviet Union and probably in the Middle East. When engaging with the CSTO, NATO would also be advised to suggest collaboration on the issues aimed at stabilising Afghanistan and coordinated actions against illicit trafficking of drugs and psychotropic substances, WMD, illegal immigration and other threats against security of both sides. In return, Moscow should let its neighbours to join NATO if they wish since the NATO-CSTO effective engagement will come to prove that NATO has no covered intention to dismantle Russia's regional role. In this vein, the OSCE platform can yield a feasible mechanism to draw NATO and the CSTO to offer a universal security burden-sharing agenda while seeking to set at least a nascent groundwork for acknowledging the shared interest to enhance the security and status quo stability for the wider Eurasia.

# **The Evolution of the Security Environment in the South Caucasus since the End of the Cold War**

*Sadi Sadiyev and Khayal Iskandarov*

## **Abstract**

This paper sketches the historical evolution of the security environment in the South Caucasus since the end of the Cold War. It traces in particular the emergence of three independent countries in the region as full members of world community in the wake of USSR's collapse. This article argues that after the rise of Russia to world pre-eminence, today's world is becoming bipolar again and the relations between super powers are more tenuous than they used to be during the Iron Curtain period. To that effect, a new Cold War period seems to be in the offing. Yet, the main conclusion drawn from this paper is that for small states in the South Caucasus the optimum security strategy is to strike the right balance between these two poles (Russia and NATO). As a result, with the assumption of the Russia-NATO partnership, the paper realizes that in order to bring harmony within the international security, specifically in the South Caucasus, there is a need for the two major players to work hand in hand.

## **The Evolution of the Security Environment in the South Caucasus since the End of the Cold War**

The second half of the 1980s was a period of significant changes in world politics. The bipolar system of the Cold War vanished as a result of these processes. During the Cold War there was a power struggle between the US-led Western Bloc (NATO) and the USSR-led Eastern Bloc (Warsaw Pact). Most states were forced to become members or allies of one of these blocs. But the end of the Cold war utterly changed the geopolitical situation: the soviet threat disappeared, and the bipolar system was replaced with the unipolar system. However, with the disintegration of the USSR a spate of problems emerged among the states which used to be in the same block or known to be formerly allied.



Since the demise of the Cold War the fundamental changes occurred in Europe have transformed the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. According to some high-profile public figures and scholars, the end of bipolarity and the absence of a single unifying threat in the form of the Soviet Union would lead to the dissolution of NATO and the re-emergence of balancing behavior in Europe.<sup>1</sup> But conversely, NATO prospered and grew into more flexible and successful form of the Alliance. In a nutshell NATO has not only survived, but also expanded both its functional and geographical scope.

As we mentioned with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact NATO lost its “archenemy”. For NATO it was a sweeping victory over the USSR. But at the same time it was a “tragedy” for the Alliance challenging its existence in a new era. As Andrew Cottey mentioned, “The end of the Cold War gave rise to the questions not only about the future activities of NATO, simultaneously its survival”.<sup>2</sup> But the contradictory developments that the system of international relations and international security environment met after the collapse of the Soviet Union brought the issue of independence and sovereignty into the heart of the debate on the future of the international community and the new world order. The actual transformation of the European security architecture necessitated NATO’s involvement in the crises occurred throughout the continent. That is the primary reason why NATO, which has been considered as the first security guarantor emerged after the end of the Second World War, has not been dismantled. In a short period of time several dangers and threats occurred which necessitated NATO’s engagement. These threats were: religious extremists, Saddam Hussein, finally Serbs and their leader Slobodan Milosevic. However, these threats in comparison with the Soviet threat were pretty much confined.

The three South Caucasus nations (Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians) were among those nations craving for independence, thus, pulling

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<sup>1</sup> Krahnmann E. The Emergence of Security Governance in Post-Cold War Europe. Working Paper 36/01, 2001 <[http://www.one-europe.ac.uk/pdf/w36\\_krahnmann.pdf](http://www.one-europe.ac.uk/pdf/w36_krahnmann.pdf)>, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Cottey A. NATO transformed: The Atlantic Alliance in a new era. In: Park W. and Wyn Rees G. (eds), *Rethinking Security in Post-Cold War Europe*. London and New York: Longman, 1998, p. 190. pp. 43-60. p. 44.

out all the stops to get rid of the soviet yoke. The dissolution of the Soviet Union was really a significant event in this regard. The situation completely changed, democracy, freedom and cooperation with the West became the first priority of these nations. To that effect all three nations carved out their freedom. While the region was once considered to be on the periphery of the international agenda, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union it became much more important to the new world order. However, the region is challenged with unresolved conflicts and socio-political and economic problems brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The protracted conflicts in the region have long been a source of tension for both Georgia and Azerbaijan.<sup>3</sup>

The period after the end of the Cold War regarding the South Caucasus region can be divided into two stages. The first stage is the period between 1991 (after the Collapse of the USSR) and 2000 (when Vladimir Putin came to power). The second stage is from 2000s until now. In the first stage Russia was not supposed to be intransigent as it is now. Therefore deepening the relations with the West for the South Caucasus states was more plausible. The war in Ukraine suggests a new era of competition between the West and Russia exactly like it was after the World War II that pits the West's relatively liberal vision for the region against a more conservative 'Russian Europe'. The Baltic countries were lucky to come under the umbrella of NATO. Because it took place at the outset of Russian revanchism. Therefore these countries circumvented Russian aggression on their way to NATO membership. If their membership had been delayed for couple years, Estonia and Latvia would have definitely suffered another "Crimea" crises. As one Western observer has suggested, Putin's second term as president (beginning in 2004) was accompanied by ever more insistent suggestions that a 'new Cold War' was in the making.<sup>4</sup> In 2005, during his yearly Federal Assembly speech, Putin described the collapse of the USSR as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century". This speech has subsequently returned to haunt the Western debate about Russia, with

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<sup>3</sup> Nasirov E, Iskandarov Kh, Sadiyev S. The South Caucasus: A Playground between NATO and Russia? // Connections QJ 16, no. 3 (2017), pp. 47-56.

<sup>4</sup> Monaghan A. A 'New Cold War'? Abusing History, Misunderstanding Russia. Russia and Eurasia Programme, Research Paper May 2015, p. 16.

commentators often observing that it suggested Putin's intention to rebuild the USSR and that it was an early indicator of what was to come in 2014.<sup>5</sup> The incidents (energy crisis between Russia, Ukraine and Europe in 2006, Russo-Georgian war in 2008, another energy crisis in 2009 and Crimean annexation in 2014) have occurred since Putin's team started to call the tune apparently prove it. A 'new Cold War' narrative, increasingly popular, interprets this competition as a resumption of the Cold War. Many Western political figures and observers have asserted that Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, is trying to turn back the clock, even to rebuild the USSR, and therefore that the experience of the Cold War could offer useful lessons for politicians today.<sup>6</sup>

The paths of the three South Caucasus republics have been different since the end of the Cold War in terms of their geo-political ambitions, with Armenia being a CSTO member, Azerbaijan pursuing an independent policy regarding global powers, and Georgia, apparently, demonstrating a pro-NATO position. However, their destinies are strongly intertwined, and it is difficult to speak about the security threats in the region without taking their common geopolitical environment and mutual relations into account. Though it has been 27 years since USSR dissolved, its legacy still strongly influences the current state of affairs. Internal developments have created risks of instability in all three states. The lack of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with sporadic rekindling of mutual hostilities, Russia's increased assertiveness in the region and the absence of a Western presence have been the central elements in understanding the current situation in the region since the collapse of the USSR. Georgia lost control over two of its territories – Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which currently recognized by Russia. All of these issues has created the general atmosphere of insecurity and volatility, further exacerbated by the ongoing change in the geopolitical environment and the restructuring of the world order.

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<sup>5</sup> Putin deplores collapse of USSR, Last Updated: Monday, 25 April, 2005 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4480745.stm>>.

<sup>6</sup> Monaghan A. A 'New Cold War'? Abusing History, Misunderstanding Russia. Russia and Eurasia Programme, Research Paper May 2015, p. 16.

However, many European political scientists see the South Caucasus as a center of economic interest and an important transportation corridor.<sup>7</sup> Other factors have also fueled interest in the region. Foremost among these are its natural resources (the Caspian basin) and the proximity of three major and ambitious Eurasian states: Russia, Turkey and Iran. The region plays a crucial role as a transport and energy corridor. Today Europe relies heavily on Russian oil and natural gas. However, the EU is aiming to prevent Russia from wielding energy as a coercive tool and the Caspian basin has the utmost importance in this policy.<sup>8</sup> The Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey corridor has become a critical strategic link between Europe and Central Asia which necessitates the importance of the South Caucasus region. This corridor includes the production and transportation of hydrocarbons.

The Ukraine crisis has underscored the fundamental differences showing how Euro-Atlantic security is understood in the West and in Russia, particularly in relation to the post-Cold War Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Moscow argues that the organizations like NATO and EU are not for unifying but dividing European security protections afforded by these institutions can change unpredictably and therefore are unreliable. These differences which are construed as a gap in values increasingly causes conspicuous attrition between more liberal Western values and the more conservative Russian approach. The South Caucasus as region in Russian “near abroad” is prone to suffer from this attrition with no end in sight. Due to their dearth of resources, small states like Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have to choose between two security policy options: they can either opt for alliance (Armenia and Georgia) or autonomy (Azerbaijan) (it does not rule out the close cooperation with different alliances). The countries like Armenia and Georgia (with insufficient recourses, heavily dependent on external powers) adopt a bandwagoning strategy in order to maintain their sovereignty, which corresponds to joining an alliance. The securi-

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<sup>7</sup> Tamaz Papuashvili, “Georgia–NATO: Cooperation Prospects” <<http://gcssi.org/wp2/?p=5139>>.

<sup>8</sup> Eric S. Thompson, “Turkish Influence in the South Caucasus and Levant: The Consequences for NATO and the EU,” Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, September 2013 <[http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/37733/13Sep\\_Thompson\\_Eric.pdf](http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/37733/13Sep_Thompson_Eric.pdf)>.

ty policy option for Azerbaijan (with sufficient resources) is a balanced strategy. This allows Azerbaijan to benefit from any alliance since a balanced policy doesn't rule out close cooperation. In this way Azerbaijan does not expect protection from major powers and consequently can expect to stay out of others' wars. Traditionally this option was characterized by the adoption of a policy of neutrality. As former Finnish President Urho Kekkonen argued:

One of the lessons which history teaches us is that a small people like the Finns cannot coerce its neighbors into the kind of settlements which it would like. Our own resources are not adequate for that and relying on outside support would mean throwing oneself on the mercy of the unknown as well as sowing the seeds of discord.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore the neutrality was a guarantor of Finnish sovereignty throughout the Cold War and post-Cold War period. This statement is a case in point for all South Caucasus regions, since the new Cold War is in the offing.

## **Conclusion**

Though the South Caucasus occupies a small spot on the world map, the scale of the interest in the region is much bigger than its geographical size. In terms of its geopolitical and strategic importance the region has always been at the forefront of global powers' foreign policy. The hegemonic powers have been using it throughout the history in order to exert their influence on neighboring areas. Even though 27 years have elapsed since the end of the Cold War and the current European strategic environment is very different than that time, the picture of the security environment in the South Caucasus is all the same. The protracted conflicts still remain unresolved, external powers meddle in the regional states' internal affairs. All three countries pursue utterly different strategies which make their unification a pipe dream. It is time to think of Russia and its relationship with the West. This is necessary for the West to understand the challenges and opportunities Russia presents, and to adequately respond to them, as well as step up its efforts in the South Caucasus. Otherwise, the region might fall

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<sup>9</sup> Jean-Marc Rickli, European small states' military policies after the Cold War: from territorial to niche strategies. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Volume 21, Number 3, September 2008, p. 310.

into the trap of the Russian revanchism, doesn't matter reluctantly or willingly which will definitely let Russians gain a foothold in controlling the South Caucasus region as a whole and isolating the Central Asian countries from the West. That might be an egregious loss for the West.

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# Strategic Communication under Rising International Tension: Challenges and Opportunities for the EU and Russia Security

*Evgeny Pashentsev*<sup>1</sup>

The relations between Russia and the EU are important for both sides. Researchers from different countries are coming to this conclusion; however, they give different answers to the question which factors raised the confrontation between two sides.<sup>2</sup> We have noticed a sharp deterioration of relations between Russia and the EU in recent years, most notably since the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine. Despite the importance of the events in Ukraine (and their different and rather often diametrically opposing interpretations), we will show that the ongoing deterioration is complicated by a combination of various factors. There are serious grounds for imagining further degradation of EU-Russia relations up to the highly undesirable and dangerous point of collapse and the use of military means. However, at the same time, there are also opportunities to increase trust, and build over time friendly relations between states not only in Europe but throughout the world. Of course, this will require radical changes in different countries taking into account their national backgrounds, historical experience and shared realities and trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Strategic communication (defined as the synchronization of **deeds**, words and images of state and non-state actors) plays and will play an even more important role in these

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<sup>2</sup> Dinan, Desmond/Nugent, Neill/Paterson, William: *The European Union in Crisis*. London 2016; Schoen, Douglas/Roth Smith, Ewan: *Putin's Master Plan: To Destroy Europe, Divide NATO, and Restore Russian Power and Global Influence*. New York 2016; Haukkala, Hiski: *The EU-Russia Strategic Partnership: The Limits of Post-Sovereignty in International Relations*. Abingdon 2011; Rosefielde, Steven/Kuboniwa, Masaaki/Mizobata, Satoshi/Haba, Kumiko (Ed.): *The Unwinding of the Globalist Dream: EU, Russia and China*. Singapore 2018; Makarychev, Andrey: *Russia and the EU in a Multipolar World: Discourses, Identities, Norms (Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society)*. Stuttgart 2014; Maass, Anna-Sophie: *EU-Russia Relations, 1999-2015: From Courtship to Confrontation*. London – New York 2016.



crucial processes,<sup>3</sup> which we try to identify in the context of scientific and technological, social and geopolitical shifts in the international arena.

### **The Challenges for Strategic Communication of the EU and the Relations with Russia**

In the realm of strategic communication, actions are crucial for the transmission of messages directed at specific target groups as well as to the entire population, which to a large extent determines their activities. It is quite natural for individual states and state entities to develop strategic communication concepts, even if this term is not present in their official documents.

What kind of messages is the EU nowadays conveying through its actions? Unfortunately, signals of internal disunity and inability to cope with growing problems. Words on the part of high officials about the desire to strengthen European unity (even though there is a powerful communication apparatus working behind them) are experiencing more and more difficulty to transmit the idea of EU unity to European citizens, as the actions and images of objective reality show another reality (differentials in development of North and South Europe, the growth of external debt, the migration problem, the growing income disparity among the population, etc.).

The apparent lack of synchronisation of actions, words and images indicates the practical absence of the EU's strategic communication, stalling the entire complex system of national, interstate and supranational mechanisms of the EU, which is fraught with serious consequences for the maintenance of its unity. The lack of synchronisation leads to a decrease in expectations and effects all integration initiatives, because people cease to believe in them. The long-term investment appeal of the region is diminishing, inter-state disunity and tensions between ethnic groups are intensifying, society starts to gain a growing sense of people's uncertainty about their

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<sup>3</sup> For the author's position on this point see also: Pashentsev, Evgeny: Strategic Communication in Russia-EU Relations under Global Shifts. In: Pashentsev, Evgeny/Vlaeminck, Erik (Eds.): Strategic Communication in EU-Russia Relations: Tensions, Challenges and Opportunities. Moscow, 2018.

future, etc. Quantitative parameters on that are contained in many European reports, international statistics and population surveys.

The relationship between Russia and the EU should be considered in the context of the changes that are taking place on the European scene. It is necessary to separate the supranational structures of the EU and the member states. The internal situation within the member states is also ambiguous and volatile. The rise of Eurosceptic parties of different social orientations in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, France and other countries does not mean that the majority of the population of these countries wants to break economic, political and cultural ties with each other: they have long, though ambiguous traditions and relations. Of concern here, is the growing dissatisfaction with the social effectiveness of the supranational mechanism for regulating interstate relations in the EU which seems to be more in line with the interests of a supra-national bureaucratic elite and a certain part of transnational companies than with the interests of most EU citizens.

Although critical assessments of the actions and the recognition of serious mistakes and problems made in the process of European integration were heard in official statements, it is unlikely that similar declarations in relation to its foreign policy, particularly, vis-à-vis Russia will be heard. The Brexit and elections in several European countries have shown that the European public has the right to disagree with mistakes made at the European level. This raises questions about Russia's position to disagree with the tendency to stick to the country a label of being the sole responsible for the crisis in Ukraine as well as in relation to accusations of interference in elections in European countries. Nowadays, it seems to be difficult to consider those opinions that advocate a process of dialogue among equals responsible for the destinies of their peoples and a state of peacefulness on the planet. On the contrary, those voices aggravating relations between Russia and the EU countries and are dangerously and irresponsibly playing with the destiny of the world putting the future and the very existence of European nations at risk.

Russia is not indifferent about what is going on in the EU. First of all, for economic reasons, as the EU countries are still Russia's largest trading partner. Second, for cultural reasons, as the interpenetration and mutual influence of our cultures is difficult to ignore. Third, because of historical

reasons – it is enough to recall that the two World Wars have begun in Europe and involved both Russia and European countries.

Isolationism for Russia is strategically insecure and hopeless. Russia is historically, economically and culturally linked with Europe as well as with any other region of the world. The stagnation, weakening and much more the rupture of these ties will bring harm. Russians and Europeans from different social groups and of different political and cultural orientation raise their voices for normalisation of our relations. We need a lot of patience and should not expect quick results, but working for a better peaceful future should stand central.

However, it seems that within the central organs of the EU, including the bodies responsible for strategic communication, other moods play as well. **The EU's East StratCom Task Force** was set up by the EU's High Representative Federica Mogherini in 2015, in response to a request from all 28 EU Heads of Government to “address Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns.” It is a team of eleven communications and Russian language experts, who also seek to improve communication on EU policies towards the Eastern Neighbourhood and to strengthen media plurality in the region, especially through the use of Russian. “The Task Force's flagship products are its weekly Disinformation Review of pro-Kremlin disinformation stories and its social media accounts @EUvsDisinfo and EU vs Disinformation.”<sup>4</sup> The establishment of a strategic communication unit with the principle purpose to counteract “Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns” is diminishing the core understanding of the EU's strategic communication as a synchronisation of its deeds, words and images.

A report prepared by the European Union Institute for Security Studies convincingly states;

It is difficult to deny that the Union's ‘soft power’ has suffered considerably in recent times: internal divisions, inadequate policy delivery, and mounting populism have all contributed to creating an environment (even inside the EU itself) that is

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<sup>4</sup> Commentary: Means, goals and consequences of the pro-Kremlin disinformation campaign (19.01.2017). <[euvsdisinfo.eu/commentary-means-goals-and-consequences-of-the-pro-kremlin-disinformation-campaign/](http://euvsdisinfo.eu/commentary-means-goals-and-consequences-of-the-pro-kremlin-disinformation-campaign/)>, accessed on 22.03.2018.

significantly more receptive to their messaging. This, in turn, further undermines Europe's 'soft power' and, more generally, EU influence. Both types of campaigning have indeed scored important points, both inside and outside the EU. Russia has successfully targeted both elites and significant minority groups frustrated with mainstream politics; its main emphasis has been on negative messaging and undermining the EU's own narrative. For its part, ISIL has operated mainly below the radar and at a grassroots level, combining a religion-infused anti-Western rhetoric with a violence-inspired dystopia.<sup>5</sup>

Although I do not want to comment further on what has been repeated in many materials of the EU and its think-tanks, that is, to put Russia and ISIS "in one basket." Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that in the 53 pages long above mentioned report there is no mentioning at all about the EU's shortcomings, let alone attempts to formulate how to change the current situation for the better in the interests of the EU. Answers to how to improve SC are given in the Report only with regard to the communication sphere.

In terms of method and style, the EU's communications have often been faceless, anonymous, technocratic, unemotional, and reliant upon the expectation (or rather assumption) that facts will speak for themselves. This has started to change, with a greater emphasis on story-telling and the use of "real people." Perceptions are no less important, and they can be shaped – as the examples of Russia and ISIL confirm.<sup>6</sup>

But shaping perceptions by good story-telling without the changing of **deeds will** logically lead to perception management in the EU policy even though the authors of such reports have no intentions for doing that.

The reasons for such limited interpretation of SC are:

1. Methodological underestimation of strategic communication as just a communication tool.
2. Low level of responsibility for the professional activity involving SC in the public hierarchy of the EU. It has to be regarded as a func-

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<sup>5</sup> Strategic communications – East and South. ISS Report No. 30/2016. Paris. <[https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Report\\_30.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Report_30.pdf)>, accessed on 08.08.2018, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

tion of strategic management and strategic decision making through communication to be efficient. Such tendency is already present in big business and politics, but not yet in the bureaucratic structures of the EU.

3. SC has to be controlled by genuine democratic institutions with a progressive agenda related to crisis management. This is not always the case in relation to the EU.
4. A successful European SC concept is impossible without the establishment of a successful strategy for the EU.
5. Although a SC concept of the EU exists, it benefits first of all only a very narrow circle of people. From this point of view, this absolute minority (which we label here “De Lux of the EU”) benefits already for a long time because of the rising concentration of assets and power in their hands. Their position is guaranteed and stable and has seemingly its own SC which is rather unsuccessful if not catastrophic for the EU in its whole.

In general strategic communication of the EU and Russia is more and more dominated by the interests of strategic psychological warfare against each other which is dangerous for both sides. Psychological warfare has several levels: tactical, operational and strategic of which each solves a specific task. The most important level is the strategic which aims at the direction of the development of a particular country or the international system as a whole in a for the leading actor desirable direction. Very often the object to which the psychological impact is directed is not aware of the character and the real scope of long-term operations that are modifying its mode of thinking and behaviour. In socio-political terms, strategic psychological warfare (SPW) is the explicit and implicit long-term focused psychological impact of competing systems’ (state, supra-state, inter-state and non-state actors) attempts to inflict damage and/or the liquidation (or assignment) of intangible assets on the other side in order to win in the material sphere.

In the field of psychological warfare, various schemes of explicit and implicit influence on the way of thinking and behaviour of individuals and social groups are at play, as well as the inspiration of erroneous manage-

ment decisions, provoking repressions against the opposition, and much more.

SPW is the systematic, long-term impact on the nodal elements of the public organism in order to create a dominance of negative trends in its development. Political, economic, diplomatic steps with regard to the next planned victim of a direct aggression or latent “regime change” (sometimes the two variants are combined) always have an internal logic sequence to strengthen internal destabilisation on the one hand and the external isolation of the target regime on the other. The sequence should gradually form negative attitudes towards the authorities among the population of a country and international condemnation of an “authoritarian regime” (under such threats each regime becomes less democratic).

Since there are no ideal governments on earth and the existing socio-political systems are far from being perfect from all points of view, it is not difficult to do so with overwhelming military, economic and information power. It follows such logic: the external actor begins the open offensive within the country through its local proxies when the high level of degradation of the regime (corruption, bureaucracy, high property and social stratification, etc.) appears evident. This results in a high degree of discontent with this regime among significant segments of the population. Thus, from this perspective, so-called revolutions (metaphors for regime change for the purpose of geopolitical reorientation of a country) are attempts by a variety of means, and, not least, through the management of consciousness and actions of target groups to further exacerbate existing contradictions in society through technologies of psychological warfare. It is impossible to abolish the right and duty of people for an uprising against repressive reactionary regimes, let alone abolish the objective laws of the social revolution, but we can and should distinguish genuine revolution from regime change.

In general, technologies of regime destabilisation are most effective when the degeneration of the regime accumulates, but not in the very last moment. In the very end of this process, an uncontrollable chaos emerges or a generation of the new revolutionary upward force stands up. This is hard or impossible to counteract. The feudal counterrevolution broke down facing the iron will of the Jacobins and similarly, the Triple Entente was not able to stop the Bolsheviks. The last research of RAND on political

warfare recognizes these challenges. For example the USA provided about \$1 billion in intelligence and air support – as part of a NATO intervention – on behalf of the Libyan rebels fighting the Muammar Gaddafi regime. While the support helped the rebels overthrow Gaddafi, this intervention – like its Cold War predecessors – fell victim to unintended consequences, as Libya collapsed into chaos and became a safe haven for the Islamic State.<sup>7</sup>

Since 1998, Russia has introduced annually a resolution at the United Nations calling for an international agreement to combat

...means and methods used with a view to damaging another State's information resources, processes and systems; use of information to the detriment of a State's defence, administrative, political, social, economic or other vital systems, and the mass manipulation of a State's population with a view to destabilizing society and the State.<sup>8</sup>

Also Western scholars acknowledge that in the UN “the groundwork and idea for a resolution on information security came from the Russian Federation”... Moscow's original proposal in the UN First Committee was to ban information weapons and their use by way of a dedicated international legal regime.<sup>9</sup>

For a long time, Western state actors have been ready to discuss cybersecurity issues but not the perception and communication management threats. It has consistently opposed these efforts to close opportunities for interstate psychological warfare through Internet under the pretext that such initiatives represent the interests of authoritarian states to control Internet and restrict freedom of information. It is not surprising from this perspective that Russia was condemned without clear evidence for meddling in the latest American elections and that investigations as well as Western main stream media campaigns were organized to prove such kind of interference of Russia in the EU elections in 2017. But in light of recent developments

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<sup>7</sup> Robinson, Linda/Helmus, Todd/Cohen, Raphael/Nader, Alireza/Radin, Andrew/Magnuson, Madeline/Migacheva, Katya: *Modern Political Warfare Current Practices and Possible Responses*. Santa Monica 2018, p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Tikk, Eneken/Kerttunen, Mika: *The Alleged Demise of the UN GGE: An Autopsy and Eulogy*. New York, The Hague, Tartu, Jyvaskyla 2017, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8-9.

(Cambridge Analytica – Facebook) Russia’s position seems to be more balanced and consistent.

Fakes as a part of SPW play a very negative role in the relations between states whether it is in the sphere of politics or business. In October 2016, Russian news outlet RBC reported that there were at least seven companies registered between March and July 2016 in the UK with names similar to well-known Russian firms. The company names registered in Britain were Rosneft Oil Company Ltd, PJSC Tatneft Ltd, JSC Transneft Ltd, Oil Company LUKOIL Ltd, Surgutneftegas Ltd, PJSOC Bashneft Ltd, and Public Joint Stock Company Gazprom Neft Ltd. The companies were fakes and did not have any connection with the real Russian companies, despite the fraudulent scheme to be registered as managed by the same persons that are the top managers of the real companies. The registration of limited companies with standard charter is easily done online in 24 hours and only costs £12.<sup>10</sup>

In the beginning of 2017, five Russian oil companies have won appeals and lawsuits in the UK to have their fraudulent and unconnected ‘doppelgangers’ registered in 2016 removed from the UK Companies House, according to court rulings.<sup>11</sup> If RBC did not ring the alarm bell, there would not have been such reaction by Russian companies, and mainstream media could potentially have spread disinformation connected with the activities of so-called big Russian oil companies in the UK.

Maybe a joint interest of the EU and Russia is to establish some kind of independent centre for identification of *latent psychological attacks* coming from the third parties (any state or non-state actor interested to provoke misunderstanding between the EU and Russia and having professional potential to do that). If joint military procedures to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding exist why not introduce such procedures in the in-

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<sup>10</sup> В Британии появились «клоны» крупнейших российских нефтяных компаний (21.10.2016). <[www.rbc.ru/economics/21/10/2016/580939839a79474a17f4bccd?from=main](http://www.rbc.ru/economics/21/10/2016/580939839a79474a17f4bccd?from=main)>, accessed on 22.01.2018.

<sup>11</sup> Britain Liquidates Russian Oil Companies’ Fraudulent ‘Clones’ (23.03.2017). <[themoscowtimes.com/news/britain-liquidates-russian-energy-companies-fraudulent-clones-57516](http://themoscowtimes.com/news/britain-liquidates-russian-energy-companies-fraudulent-clones-57516)>, accessed on 22.01.2018.



formation sphere which are very important in secure peace in Europe and not only. Under volatile economy seems especially dangerous a latent information campaigns coming from *some* TNCs with support of the *elements* of state structures.

## **The Shifts in the Modern World and Their Impact on Russia and EU Security**

**Geopolitically**, the shifts in the balance of economic, scientific-technological and military potential from the US to China and to India and other “emerging” economies should be highlighted. The consequences of these changes are affecting the foreign-policy orientation of European countries and will continue to affect them even more in the future. The EU countries’ role in the economy, foreign relations, military affairs and scientific development is also gradually diminishing as a result of both objective and subjective reasons. **Politically**, the growing influence of the forces challenging the current model of global integration, obviously created by the formula for TNC, should be noted. Some TNCs (unhappy with their share of the excess profit “pie”), the growing sectors of national business as well as the populations of both developed and developing countries are challenging this model, resulting in phenomena such as Donald Trump, the growing popularity of Marine Le Pen on the French right and Jean-Luc Mélenchon on the French left, or figures such as the deceased Hugo Chávez and his successor Nicolás Maduro.

These changes entail certain political risks. The far-right (not often artificially and deliberately labelled by the mainstream media) holds very dangerous approaches to the modern borders in Europe. It appears that the “fair” sizes of “their” nations are always way beyond (sometimes far way beyond!) the current boundaries of the respective countries. Their proposed measures of justice are different and even include the use of military force. One can easily imagine the fate of Europe if such groups would take over power.

Neither the stagnant economy of the European Union, nor its potential collapse will solve the social-economic problems of its members, for the crisis of modern capitalism is growing and the EU crisis is only a part of it. There is a need for working out alternative development models of the

entire human civilisation, which requires the cooperation between the peoples of the world, not their confrontation. Though respectful of the previous efforts to suggest an alternative development model, we have to admit that we cannot repeat 1789 or 1917, nor can we confine ourselves to a number of limited reforms introduced from above. Russia does not claim that its way to a more harmonious future is the only one possible. There is also scope for principled disputes, fierce debates and political struggle. First and foremost, we have to cooperate, with the neighbouring countries that we will continue to interact with. Russian culture and science have adopted many European ideas while, at the same time, enriching Europe with a great deal of own achievements. For Russia, it is important that it stops playing the role of raw materials appendix to Europe (describing it as an “energy superpower”) and to start developing advanced industry and science.

The pace of development of both Russia and the EU does not meet their capabilities. But a stable acceleration of development within the existing socio-economic development model is highly unlikely. There is growing polarisation in the standards of life between European countries. If in 1913, the richest country in Europe achieved a GDP per capita of 3.94 times greater compared to the poorest country, in 2013 the ratio was 13.82 to one.<sup>12</sup>

Property differentiation is also growing. On average, the 10 percent wealthiest households hold half of total wealth in the OECD countries; the next richest 50 percent hold almost the entire other half, while the 40 percent least wealthy own little over 3 percent. Wealth is most concentrated at the top of the distribution in Austria, Netherlands and Germany.<sup>13</sup> In the United States, the richest 1 percent have seen their share of national income increase since 1980, from roughly 11 to 20 percent in 2014. This trend, combined with slow productivity growth, has resulted in stagnant living

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<sup>12</sup> See more: Merce, Cristian/Merce, E./Roman, Lucian: Economic and social polarization of the world. In: *Analele Universității din Oradea, Fascicula: Ecotoxicologie, Zootehnie și Tehnologii de Industrie Alimentară*, Vol. 14, Nr. B/2015, p. 309-316.

<sup>13</sup> *Understanding the Socio-Economic Divide in Europe. Background Report. OECD Centre for Opportunity and Equality* 26.01.2017, p. 10.

standards for most Americans. For the same period, Russia has a world record: from 3 to 20 percent, in Sweden from 4 to 9 percent, in Britain from 6 to 14 percent and the majority of other EU countries went along a similar road.<sup>14</sup>

The increasing strife in foreign relations reflects the growing competition for market outlets. This situation is somewhat similar to those on the eve of both the First and the Second World Wars. Ultimately, however, unsuccessful attempts to build socialism under the leadership of the proletariat showed that it lacks prospects. The liberal model of capitalism is collapsing. In such circumstances, right wing authoritarian sentiment is on the rise leading even to attempts to whitewash Nazism<sup>15</sup> as some kind of **ultima ratio** of certain elites. However, even the bloodiest dictator regimes could not stop the progress of history being only an obstacle in the way of forthcoming transformations. Humankind is a dynamic system affected by both evolutionary and revolutionary changes in the way of progress and the gradual or rapid regression, for example, through a counter-revolution. Revolts of slaves in Ancient Rome or peasants in the Middle Ages broke temporary balances of slave-owning and feudal systems, but didn't lead directly to their replacement owing to objective immaturity of preconditions. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to differentiate the dynamic equilibrium of society in the narrow sense of the word within the framework of preserving the qualitative parameters of the system and dynamic equilibrium in the broad sense of the word, with the transition from one equilibrium to another through the social revolution (coming from below or from above or some mixed options is not so important in this case).

In such a case, it is important to understand the possibilities and mechanisms of influencing the obsolete and the methods of its removal as painless as possible for society, where and since the obsolete is beginning to threaten the viability of mankind. It is particularly important to follow such

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<sup>14</sup> Rothwell, Jonathan: Myths of the 1 Percent: What Puts People at the Top. In: The New York Times, 17.11.2017.

<sup>15</sup> The Nazi whitewash (28.09.2009). <[www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/sep/28/eric-pickles-tories-latvia-nazi](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/sep/28/eric-pickles-tories-latvia-nazi)>, accessed on 22.01.2018; Simon Wiesenthal Center: Whitewashing Nazis in Eastern Europe Equate Nazism to Communism: Expert (31.10.2014). <[myfutureamerica.org/?p=5466](http://myfutureamerica.org/?p=5466)>, accessed on 22.01.2018.

an approach now. The mere presence of weapons of mass destruction will give an answer to this, the risks are too great to get an absolute “radioactive regression” instead of progress. In addition, we need to take into account the presence of hundreds of nuclear power plants around the world, biological laboratories and much more.

It is possible to formulate a mandatory requirement for the nature of planetary development: In the transition from one qualitative state of society to another, much larger and deeper than ever before, the thresholds for the disruption of the dynamic equilibrium of the social system must be lower than in the former revolutionary transitions in order to avoid the destruction of human civilisation. For example, the one-time total destruction of 10 factories 100-200 years ago during civil war anywhere in Central Europe could not, in principle, have such dangerous consequences as the destruction of one nuclear power plant today. Of course, this requirement is particularly important for compliance by nuclear powers in internal conflicts and in international sensitive areas.

The new should create preponderance over the old that the latter will be nothing left as to go away without resorting to extreme forms of military confrontation. However, the new needs determination and be prepared for “worst case scenarios”, otherwise the old risks of a dangerous confrontation, underestimating the ability and willingness to go forward by the new. Here, not only technological, economic, socio-political prerequisites of superiority are important, but informational and psychological as well, successfully synchronized within the framework of strategic communication. The stabilisation of a qualitatively new dynamic equilibrium of society is also impossible without SC.

Marxist theory of revolution with its numerous international teams of theoretical contributors and practitioners, Tektology,<sup>16</sup> Systems Theory,<sup>17</sup> Ac-

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<sup>16</sup> Богданов, Александр Александрович: Тектология: всеобщая организационная наука. Moscow 1989; Мельник, Михаил Семенович: Структурно-динамическое равновесие социально-экономических систем. In: Человеческий капитал, №. 11/2013, p. 45-51.

<sup>17</sup> Bertalanffy, Ludwig: General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications. New York 1969.

tion Theory,<sup>18</sup> Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET)<sup>19</sup> etc. are contributing today to the research of social dynamic systems. At the same time, insufficient attention is being paid to the comprehensive analysis of the issues of the unstable dynamic equilibrium of modern society, especially, in the context of random and targeted negative impacts in the field of strategic psychological warfare. After all, it is aimed at long-term disorientation of the real or potential enemy on the most important issues, and this is impossible without measures to reduce its ability to strategic thinking, and to make appropriate decision-making.

Whether it is beneficial to reduce strategic analysis and the ability to adequately respond to international challenges from a nuclear competitor or not, remains the question. Not in the least, this question should worry Russia and the EU with their nuclear and energy potentials. Not so much because of their bilateral miscalculations, but given the decline in the level of strategic thinking among some other leading actors. Misinterpretation of actions in a tense situation is fraught with special risks, especially if there are doubts about the capacities for adequate behaviour of the other party.

The ability to innovate in a deeply split antagonistic world is not a guarantee of the actors' high morality, even in relation to each other, but it gives them an objective opportunity for scientific foresight of the progressive (including its ethical dimension) historical perspective and the ability to continue the movement along the spiral of social development, rather than to participate in its final rupture. It is possible to assume that the majority of actors (including some representatives of power structures) will lead a movement of society to its new qualitative state. Some may act together with the reactionary part of the elites against this movement, inciting mass fears and phobias.

Among the possible variants of the future, we can mention:

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<sup>18</sup> Parsons, Talcott: *Action Theory and the Human Condition*. New York 1978.

<sup>19</sup> Baumgartner, Frank R./Jones, Bryan D.: *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago 1993.

- **Current neoliberal or national-conservative models** which are practically everywhere in decline. Some emerging states with relatively high growth rates will inevitably follow the fate of Japan's exhausted catch-up model of development. Rapid local conflict escalation all over the globe and especially a potential WW3 will push mankind back into the past. The depletion of natural resources, the environmental crisis, social disruption and degradation will make a transit to high-technology development models unlikely possible. We shall inevitably lose time, energy, resources, lives and much more importantly the very opportunity to correct the mistakes resulting in the ultimate collapse of humanity.
- **Modified capitalist systems** in the form of *global* authoritarian or totalitarian regimes necessary for the *artificial and controlled stagnation* of technical progress and *global* social order (no robots, AI etc.). But history proved more than once that stagnation cannot be absolute and forever. And with the current level of globalisation we have not yet a globally centralised world order. Even, if we would have such order, a long period of stagnation due to limited natural resources, growing environmental problems, a rise in income polarisation and social tensions would finally destroy such a society.
- **Centralised bureaucrat systems (under the banner of socialism)** in which central planning evenly distributes robot-produced output. It would be a bit similar to the declining European social democracy or the late USSR. As in rentism, a small elite would be in control, but it would be an elite of bureaucrats and politicians rather than capitalists. It would lead to the degradation of the majority of non-innovative people without any opportunity for socially necessary labour and the final collapse of civilisation. Some elements of this system (the combination of chronic mass unemployment in the majority of the EU countries especially among the youth, the latent degradation of education, the rising weaknesses of trade unions and political parties, the projects to compensate the loss of job through life rent, etc.) are still in progress.

- **Exterminism.** According to Peter Frase, a neo-feudal “Mad Max” society in which the rich live in fortified enclaves protected by armies of killer robots. Everybody else would be poor and living outside or exterminated by terminators owned by the wealthiest. The author points out that the poor would no longer be needed for labour so the logical solution would be to exterminate them.<sup>20</sup> It would be more pragmatic to expect the rapid and total liquidation of all “needless population” in the schemes of neofascism. It is reminiscent of Isaac Asimov’s Solaria at the very “happy end.”
- **Classless society formed by change agents** appearing as a result of the interdependent and to some extent synchronised revolutions mentioned above. Of course, it would not equal the extermination of *homo sapiens normal* by *homo sapiens advanced*. Even in the current non-ideal society, educated children do not exterminate their rather often less literate or disabled parents and friends but are ready to help them. Old generations may make the right choice as H. G. Wells’ hero of “The Food of the Gods” did. But this peaceful choice is desirable but not guaranteed, of course keeping in mind the current antagonisms and the interests of selfish groups. Perhaps, it would rather be something similar to the interstellar *Great Ring of Civilizations* in *The Bull’s Hour*, a social science fiction novel written by Soviet author and paleontologist Ivan Yefremov in 1968. Six months after its publication, the Soviet authorities banned the book and attempted to remove it from libraries and bookshops<sup>21</sup> after realizing that it contained a sharp criticism of not only capitalism and the Chinese “Cultural Revolution” mode of society but similarly of the current state of affairs in the bureaucratic USSR.

Different models may transfer to some extent one into another. Although a success of each variant is not guaranteed, we have choices as human beings. We are free to change our fate through joint efforts in this or that direction. The majority of people are accustomed to live in old paradigms

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<sup>20</sup> See more: Frase, Peter: *Four Futures: Life after Capitalism*. London – New York 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Lubenski, Andrei: A short history of Russian “fantastica.” In: *The Mentor*. Australian Science Fiction, Issue 80/1993, p. 13.

but it is (to our happiness or misfortune) more and more difficult to ignore new opportunities and risks. Logically, social apathy and inertia will lead us not to the best but rather to the worst scenarios as well as new forms of new luddites or proponents of technological progress in isolation from the relevant changes in the nature of human being and the whole of mankind.

Human society is interested in peaceful changes for a better future and this will depend on the strategic communication efforts of progressive social strata to convince people through the right synchronisation of deeds, words and images that progress can bring more to the absolute majority of people than that it threatens. There seems to be no alternative; or the transition towards a new quality through a social revolution or the destruction of human civilisation and possibly the entire planet. Only the future will tell us, how much time is left for us to think about this.

The role of strategic communication is big, because the synchronisation of the parties' efforts on the challenges of modernity and the progressive movement into the future is the very essence of SC; at least if it is put to serve society, and not to narrowly corporate selfish interests.

## **Conclusion**

It is important to find more long-term elements for cooperation not only between Russia and the EU, but between all the leading centres of the current multipolar world. The strategic task lies not in the search for the alternative configuration of global political and military blocks (or conserving the old ones), but rather in the aligning of joint interests in order to solve the principal issues of mankind. The efficiency of strategic communication as means of collaboration is negligible in the case that strategic interests and goals mismatch drastically. In this case, strategic communication inevitably becomes a tool of information warfare. There should be no illusion of the contrary. Meanwhile, the basic national interests require the opposite, namely, the harmonious interaction of countries in the interest of mutual exchange and the solution of global problems. It is also important to achieve an adequate projection of the goals, achievements, failures and prospects of this interaction in the minds of target audiences that perceive this interaction as their vital cause.



That is why compromises are essential, as well as the searching for ways to combine interests. Strategic communication can be very fruitful for the creation of a climate useful for such search, but it can aggravate the situation as well. To a certain extent, strategic communication itself is an important (and partly autonomous) factor of rapprochement or estrangement of the parties, and it is vital to procure that it serves to the accomplishment of the first task. We can fully agree with the point of view of Dennis M. Murphy, a professor of information operations and information in warfare at the US Army War College: “Basic theory – you may not change someone’s mind, but you can find areas of agreement where interests overlap.”<sup>22</sup>

Such a program of joint optimisation of strategic communication is completely impossible to implement in the current situation of growing tension between Russia and China on the one hand and the USA, the EU on the other. There is a need for a serious revolution in the core economic, technological, social and political shifts of the three countries with the consideration of their national peculiarities. This is the common interest in order to overcome the threat of a new world war and to provide conditions for a worthy democratic and progressive development for all mankind.

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<sup>22</sup> Murphy D. M. *Actions, Images, Words. Strategic Communication as a Key Leader Skill Set*. Southbridge, April 26 – 29, 2010.

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## Speaking Notes: Assessments and Diagnoses on Security and Regional Stability in Georgia

*Vaso Kapanadze*

We all live in a most complicated period, when military confrontations take place in Syria, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and periodically in other regions as well. After the break-up of “the socialist camp” and of the Soviet Union, these conflicts gradually started and they are mostly based on different visions of the European security and the confrontation between the West and Russia do not stop. The South Caucasus is really a part of the bridge, which connects the West and Russia and it is important that it should find its own place in the system of European security. That’s why it is necessary to seriously analyze the processes, which took place and take place now in the region, even on the example of the situation developed in Georgia.

Should regional powers decide behind the other European states’ back? Analyzing the August 2008 war, Anthony Cordesman argues that “... more powerful states will bend or break rules when they feel it is in their interest to do so and when there is no opposing power bloc that can pose a convincing threat.”

Although the Cold War was and is over, the fault lines have not disappeared in Europe. The East-West contest was not resumed in its previous form but has been replaced with a different confrontation – with ideological undertones, and also a cross between the different models of governance. Russia has not become a liberal democracy sharing the same values with its Euro-Atlantic counterparts. It resembles very much an “illiberal” democracy. It flirts with the concept of Eurasia representing a culture that is European and Asian at the same time. Russia aims to be the core of a grouping of countries that follows the same path (and also wants at least Ukraine to be a part of it). Moscow also promotes the oneness of all representatives of “Russian World” (“Русский Мир”) wherever they live. Their condition and the mission to protect and keep them together are priority for Russia, which is being put to practice today in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. We all know about famous Russian idea – they often say in Rus-

sia: “We will never leave our people in difficult situations!” (“Своих не бросам!”).

After the August war Russia and Georgia have completely opposite and practically incompatible views on the existing situation. Georgia believes that its historic provinces, Abkhazia and Samachablo (South Ossetia), are occupied by Russia and Russia should stop the occupation while, on the other hand, Russia’s stance is that there are currently three independent states – Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia’s position is supported by the EU, the US and the greater part of international community while Russia’s has the backing just of Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru.

The positions of the West and Russia on Abkhazia and South Ossetia are also radically different, even mutually exclusive, and the West has no instruments to force Russia to abandon its positions. Russia’s goal is to defend its “gains” from the 2008 war and it is difficult to imagine Russia stepping back.

Georgia’s declared goals to ensure its sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as fulfilling European and Euro-Atlantic integration and ensuring the geopolitical importance of the South Caucasus transit corridor are considered as largely unacceptable by Moscow. During a discussion at the German Marshal Fund’s annual Brussels Forum on 21 March 2014 NATO Secretary General Rasmussen asked Alexander Grushko, Russia’s Envoy to NATO “will you accept Georgia’s right to choose NATO membership if this is the Georgian decision and if NATO accepts? Would you accept this?” Grushko responded that: “No. I was absolutely very clear; we are against it. We believe that this is a huge mistake. This is the position of my country”. This response gave Rasmussen a clear indication of the insurmountable obstacle that NATO has to overcome in order to bring Georgia into NATO.

10 years ago, in Bucharest, was declared the promise that Georgia will join NATO. On the whole, there is a big disappointment in Georgia that despite its efforts and sacrifices NATO let Georgia down and/or perhaps even deceived Georgia despite doing its best to fulfill NATO demands. The lesson that can be learned from this bitter experience for Georgia is that NATO, despite its Open Door Policy and assistance that is provided

to Georgia, failed to deliver the goods, i.e. the MAP (Membership Action Plan) and then bringing Georgia into the Alliance. It is easier to blame NATO for all the evils rather than to admit Georgia's unrealistic expectations that the country's leadership was not and is not yet ready to accept.

Another lesson is that the Georgia's previous Government somewhat underestimated the determination of Moscow to obtain whatever it wanted and not to concede the post-Soviet space and specifically, the South Caucasus to the West and most of all, to the US.

Some in the West will argue that we should not be surprised and accept that Russia chose a different model and that strategically, the West pushed it to that direction by enlarging the EU and NATO eastwards. Integration of such a big country into the EU institutions given its history and societal development was in any case impossible according to this view. The conflict in Ukraine shows that ignoring existing common European arrangements creates instability. Will the countries between the West and Russia and its allies have a free choice or will they be forced to look one way or the other? For a state like Georgia it is vital that it can decide for itself what direction to follow and that its independence is respected if it does so. Developments in Ukraine remain a test case. Will it, and for that matter Georgia and Moldova, be allowed to become stable democracies and freely implement the agreements with the EU? Time will tell.

It should be mentioned that the policy of Russia towards its neighbours is mostly caused by the consideration of President Putin that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the greatest tragedy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The next day after the war began in South Ossetia, Putin announced in Vladikavkaz: "Over the centuries Russia played a positive role in Caucasus being a guarantor of security and cooperation. It was in the past and will also be in the future: so no one should have any doubt about it."

It is a fact that starting from the 90s there has been conducted no comprehensive analysis in Georgia of the policy of Russia and its geopolitical interests with regard to the South Caucasian region and entire post-Soviet space; and analysis of the position of Abkhazians and Ossetians to be undertaken by them in the future in case the situation escalates. The result of unwise policy of previous government structures and corresponding ag-

gressive policy of Russia, Georgia temporarily lost control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the political relations between two countries are at a deadlock.

It can be said that global contradictions exist between the values and aspirations of the Western world on the one part and, on the other, the values and aspirations of the Russian world. This reflects complicated ideological contradictions that exist in the modern world. There exists consideration in Russia that the role of the United States of America all over the world is to spread democracy and the mission of Russia within the global scale is to protect justice. At first sight, democracy and justice seem to be synonymous concepts. However, in reality, this is not always so. In reality, varied perception of both democracy and justice in the West in Russia is the basis of serious confrontation between them.

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**PART II:  
RE-INTRODUCING  
PREDICTABILITY IN RELATIONS:  
INTERNATIONAL LAW AND OTHER TOOLS**





# Moving beyond the Stalemate: The OSCE as a Stimulus for Inclusive and Cooperative European Security

*Maya Janik*

## **Abstract**

The crisis of the European security order, with deteriorating relations between Russia and the West at its core, has come to a dead end. Moving forward on the same trajectory is impossible. This paper examines the underlying problems of the current situation and advocates a revision of the current order towards one that will enhance stability and security in the whole region. It argues that breaking the deadlock between Russia and the West and building a more inclusive, cooperative, and resilient European security system requires addressing fundamental security-related matters that lie at the core of the current crisis, rather than relying on a pragmatic approach of cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as the only inclusive security organization, is best suited to stimulate, drive, and oversee the process of revitalising the idea of common European security.

## **Introduction**

The idea of an inclusive pan-European peace and security order without dividing lines between Russia and the West, as envisioned in the 1990 Charter of Paris,<sup>1</sup> has turned out to be a fairy-tale without a happy ending. Today, we are witnessing the most serious crisis of European security since the end of the Cold War. One of its most evident manifestations is the growing confrontation between Russia and the West, which risks spiralling out of control. In 2014, with the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict, it seemed as if the erosion of European peace and security had reached its

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<sup>1</sup> The Charter of Paris was signed on 21 November 1990 at the Summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE (since 1994 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE) by its 35 participating states and upgraded the 1975 Helsinki Final Act adapting it to the new political situation in Europe.

peak. However, developments that have occurred since suggest otherwise. The worst may well be yet to come. And as if the present state of affairs was not alarming enough, the crisis is being fuelled by hostile rhetoric and actions that are guided by an action-reaction mode of behaviour, rather than by strategic thinking, further exacerbating the situation. Both sides find themselves entangled in a political tug of war that threatens to draw them into a maelstrom of permanent hostility. Reciprocal mistrust and accusations are the order of the day, while there is a stark lack of serious efforts to repair the crisis.

Very recent events, including the large-scale expulsion of Russian diplomats from the United States and several EU countries following the alleged nerve agent attack on former Russian spy Sergey Skripal and his daughter in the United Kingdom in March 2018; the subsequent eviction of Western diplomats from Russia; and the airstrikes conducted by the US, UK, and France in Syria in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack by the Syrian government, suggest that both sides are teetering on the brink of escalation and a normalisation of relations cannot be expected anytime soon.

Against this background, the vision of a common space of peace and indivisible security may sound like utopia. Yet, paradoxically, the looming threat of a serious confrontation and disillusionment on both sides might be a good starting point for negotiations on European security. The example of the Helsinki Process that resulted in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 giving birth to the OSCE – then the CSCE – suggests that even in times of the highest tensions engaging in talks and reaching consensus is possible.

The starting point of the paper is the assumption that the European security order is eroding as a result of the failure to overcome the bloc-mentality that guided actions of both sides of the ‘Iron Curtain’ during the Cold War, which did not allow for building a common and inclusive security and peace order in the post-Cold War era, as was envisioned in the 1990 Charter of Paris. Instead of making equal participation in shaping the European order possible, the West as the self-declared winner of the Cold War set up a security architecture with Western institutions as its main pillars. The outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 was an eruption of disagreement

over this order and accumulating mutual mistrust which had been bubbling under the surface of Russia-West relations for more than two decades.

The central argument presented in the paper is twofold: *Firstly*, building a common and cooperative security order requires the application of a strategic approach that involves addressing and solving security-related matters which lie at the core of current tensions between Russia and the West. A pragmatic approach which advocates cooperating within areas of mutual interest is insufficient for solving the crisis in the long-term. In the immediate future, current disputes which risk provoking escalation must be addressed. *Secondly*, the OSCE, as the only inclusive security organisation, must be used as a platform for addressing these contentious issues by providing a framework for dialogue on a revised common and cooperative European security order.

The objective of the paper is to outline necessary steps towards repairing the fissures of the current system that will allow for building a common European security order. After sketching the contours of the current crisis, past developments that are key to understanding the current situation will be reflected upon. A detailed discussion of the evolution of Russia-West relations since the end of the Cold War, which have led to the current crisis of the European security order, is beyond the scope of the paper. Rather, the aim is to outline the problematic assumptions that have guided decisions in the post-Cold War era and the problems that lie at the core of the current confrontation. Next, necessary measures for stabilising the current situation in the short term will be outlined. Following this, necessary topics to be addressed in negotiations on a modified European security order will be discussed.

### **A Haunting Past: Strategic Mistakes, Broken Promises, and Missed Opportunities**

An accurate assessment of the present crisis of the European order requires reflection upon the decisions and developments that took place in the post-Cold War era. As the astronomer and astrophysicist Carl Sagan once said,

“you have to know the past to understand the present.”<sup>2</sup> The difficulty of dealing with the present situation arises from the disagreement that exists between Russia and the West on the nature and origins of the crisis. The popular narrative on what has gone wrong oscillates between two extremes whereby each side blames the other for provoking the crisis. However, using absolute and simplistic terms for describing the current state of affairs deprives it of the multiple layers that make up a complex web of unfortunate events, poor decisions, and missed opportunities that together have led to the current situation.

The Ukraine conflict is often described as a turning point in Russia-West relations, which dramatically changed the situation and is to be blamed for the crisis of the European security order. It is beyond any doubt that the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict further exacerbated relations between Russia and the transatlantic community. However, using it as a starting point for an analysis of the current situation it neglects the importance of the evolution of the post-Cold war era and the causal relationship between events more generally. Developments that took place in the period after the end of the Cold War suggest that the root causes of the present crisis go much further back in history. Rather than being the ultimate source for the current situation, the conflict in Ukraine emerged as a consequence of long-term disagreement over core security-related issues that have plagued Russian-Western relations over a long period. It bluntly exposed the systemic problems of the existing European security architecture.

The end of the Cold War raised hopes for materialising the vision of a united space free of bloc divisions and geopolitical rivalry. The Charter of Paris from 1990 envisioned a structure under the umbrella of the OSCE that would move beyond power politics and zero-sum thinking. The Charter was a milestone in the evolution of relations between the two blocs and reflected the spirit of the time, which was guided by the optimistic vision of a future guided by European policy-makers. It set forth the ambition to build a common and undivided pan-European space of cooperative securi-

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<sup>2</sup> Sagan, Carl: Episode 2: One Voice in the Cosmic Fugue [Television series episode]. In Adrian Malone (Producer), *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*. Arlington, VA: Public Broadcasting Service, 1980.

ty based on principles of international law, common values, and equality. The signatory states confirmed their commitment to work together in “a new era of democracy, peace and unity”<sup>3</sup> in which geopolitical division would give way to a single space of security. The ambition to put in place a cooperative peace and security order was underscored by agreements such as the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) that established limits on levels of armaments in order to guarantee a military balance between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and the Vienna Document on Confidence and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs), a mechanism aimed at increasing transparency in the military sphere through on-site inspections and information sharing; both agreements were adopted a few days before the Charter was signed.

Yet, reality proved otherwise. The outcome of the Cold War, i.e. the dissolution of the Soviet Union, generated a Western triumphalism and an assumption of the “end of history” whereby Western liberal democracy and the free market would be the “final form of human government”,<sup>4</sup> as Francis Fukuyama wrote in 1989. This paradigm provided the rationale for the West’s demand to unilaterally construct a new security order around Western institutions and the spread of its norms and values. This made an equal share in shaping the post-Cold War order for both the West and Russia impossible.

For more than two decades, the failure to build an inclusive European order and deal with the consequences of this failure has gradually caused fractures in the relationship between Russia and the West. Attempts to repair these were either cut short or failed due to a lack of consensus.

Finally, in 2014, the accumulation of mutual mistrust, frustration, and disagreement over fundamental issues that had been bubbling under the surface of Russia-West relations erupted. The question over the future orientation of Ukraine and the necessity of having to choose between one or the other side – a dilemma generated by the exclusive nature of institutions on

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<sup>3</sup> Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Paris 1990, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Fukuyama, Francis: The End of History. The National Interest. Summer 1989.

both sides – brought Russia and the West to a point where collision proved unavoidable.

Hopes for the building of an equal pan-European security system had already started to fade away in the early 1990s, as soon as it became evident that the “geopolitical and institutional vacuum [that emerged after the Soviet Union broke up], (...) began to be filled quite quickly by the winner.”<sup>5</sup> With the progressing enlargement of NATO and the EU, it became increasingly clear that the European security structure would not be built with the OSCE as its main pillar, as envisioned in the 1990 Paris Charter, but that it would centre around Western institutions instead, leaving Russia without the possibility of an equal position in the new framework, if not completely outside it.

Disagreement from Russian leadership over the Eastern expansion of Western institutions, voiced since the mid-1990s (when Yeltsin referred to NATO enlargement as a threat) was largely ignored. Warnings about the possible detrimental consequences of building a European security order around Western institutions only, while side-lining Russia, were expressed by the expert community too, from the early 1990s on. Being well aware of the danger of an order dominated by the ‘winner’ of the Cold War, in 1990 the American historian John Lewis Gaddis suggested maintaining both NATO and the Warsaw Pact in Europe after the Cold War, uniting them in one single pan-European security organisation. Whether this would have been doable is questionable, however, what is valuable about this suggestion is that it reflected the legitimate concern about leaving one side outside of the security framework.

For the West, after the breakup of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Communist system, offering post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe the opportunity to integrate into the Western community and to adopt liberal democracy and free market economies seemed like a logical thing to do. Achieving a stable and prosperous post-Cold War Europe was equated

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<sup>5</sup> Lukyanov, Fyodor: Russia and the EU: A New Future Requested. In: Nitoiu, Cristian (Ed.): Avoiding a New ‘Cold War’: The Future of EU-Russia Relations in the Context of the Ukraine Crisis. Special Report. LSE ideas. March 2016, p. 16.

with the idea of enlarging Western institutions. There is no doubt that the enlargement policy towards post-Communist states in Europe increased levels of prosperity, democracy, and also the number of new opportunities previously unavailable in these states.

Yet, despite all the good intentions and the benefits that Western enlargement granted to individual states, the policy failed to take into account the possible consequences that might occur in the long-term. The enlargement policy was based on a lack of understanding of Russian foreign policy thinking and the erroneous assumption that Russia would humbly and submissively accept a unilaterally imposed Western order and an unquestioned expansion of its institutions. Russia's inaction in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War created an illusion of its approval of the ongoing processes of enlarging Western institutions. In reality, Russia was occupied with dealing with the domestic chaos that it was left with in the ashes of the Cold War, including a difficult economic situation. Today, there seems to exist a consensus that the West took advantage of Russia's weakness at that time, treating it as a defeated enemy.<sup>6</sup> The argument that is frequently raised today by the political and academic community, namely that Russia was indeed offered a place within Western security structures, tends to ignore the fact that Russia would have had to accept Western terms – a *sine qua non* that was unacceptable for Russia.

The fact that a new order that aimed to integrate post-Communist European states was built on the foundation of NATO – the military organisation that formed an opposing bloc to the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War – was, for Russia, an indicator that the new order might aimed to continue the objectives NATO was created for, i.e. protecting its members against the threat of the Soviet Union/Russia and rolling back its influence. Richard Sakwa argues rightly that if one side feels wronged, regardless of whether it has grounds for concerns or not, then a security problem exists.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Krastev, Ivan: The crisis of the post-Cold War European order. What to do about Russia's newfound taste for confrontation with the West. Brussels Forum Paper Series. The German Marshall Fund of the United States. March 2008, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Sakwa, Richard: Reflections on Post-Cold War Order. European Leadership Network. 2015.



In order to maintain a form of cooperation with Russia, in parallel to Western expansion, certain cooperative platforms were established. Nevertheless, cooperative mechanisms such as the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), as well as joint endeavours to fight terrorism or ensure non-proliferation proved insufficient to compensate for Russia's marginalisation in the post-Cold War order. Instead, the chasm between Russia and the West continuously widened.

When looking at the more recent history of poor decisions, unfortunate events, and missed opportunities that are important for understanding the current situation, the Russian-Georgian war and events around it in 2008 must be taken into account. The Russian-Georgian war should have been indeed treated as a warning and an inducement to reconsider the relationship between Russia and the West, but was considered a one-time incident. Vladimir Putin's statement made during the NATO-Russia summit in 2008, in which he spoke of Ukraine's artificial borders and urged the West not to provoke a conflict in reaction to the US administration's suggestion to grant Ukraine and Georgia NATO membership, should have been treated as a warning and indication of Russia's action in the future. At that time, the chief editor of *Russia in Global Affairs*, Fyodor Lukyanov, warned presciently: "Ukraine will be the main battleground in the impending geopolitical confrontation. The situation there is fraught with the possibility of wide-scale destabilization and intervention by foreign powers."<sup>8</sup> Two decades earlier, President Carter's former national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski underscored Ukraine's importance to Russia; "without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire."<sup>9</sup>

What followed later was an interplay of tense relations and initiatives aimed at restoring the cooperative spirit between Russia and the West. Going into detail regarding all these events would exceed the scope of this paper, but what is important in order to grasp the bigger picture is to understand the

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<sup>8</sup> Lyukanov, Fyodor: Walking carefully from Transdnestr to Yerevan. *The Moscow Times*. 17 September 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew: *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*. New York: Basic 1997.

common denominator inherent to the ultimate failure of all attempts at successful cooperation. Persistent impediments to attempts to leave the trajectory of mutual antagonism seem to be the divergent threat perceptions of Russia and the West and their long-term disagreement over the security matters that the asymmetric construction of the European order has generated. These have never seriously been addressed, even during periods of a constructive relationship-building. The fact that the OSCE, as the only truly pan-European organisation, was side-lined through NATO and the EU's expansion and never given a chance to become the main pillar of the European security order makes it doubtful whether the initiatives brought forward had any prospect for success at all. The refusal to fix this asymmetry lies at the core of the failure of initiatives from Medvedev's 2008 proposal over the Obama administration's 'reset' policy from 2009 to the 2010 Meseberg Memorandum.

The assessment outlined above shows that the current situation should not come as a shock to policymakers. Besides the failure to realise the vision of the 1990 Charter of Paris, many decisions taken since the end of the Cold War have lacked the strategic thinking that would have accounted for the possible consequences this might have caused and thus avoided such miscalculation. At the same time, events that should have been treated as warnings have been largely ignored.

### **Towards a New European Security Model that Benefits All**

In light of the current crisis, the need for a new European security deal is evident. Yet, as the debate within the political and academic community shows, there is no consensus on whether a new deal is needed at all.

However, it is hard to neglect the fact that had the current system worked properly, we would not currently be facing the biggest of European security crises. Even if the Ukraine crisis can be resolved, and an agreement over other issues of contention – including the situation in Syria – reached, the systemic problems of the post-Cold War order will persist. Therefore, continuing on the current course, or returning to *business as usual* or the *status quo ante Ukraine* is neither possible nor desirable.

This leads to the question why parts of the – particularly Western – political community reject or at least remain cautious regarding suggestions to repair the current order? Those who reject the necessity of re-examining the European security architecture insist that the present one is fine, with well-established institutions and a robust international legal framework. It is only necessary to abide by the rules, principles, and norms of the current order for it to function properly, so the argument goes. At the core of the hesitant attitude towards modifications to the current order is the concern that any new deal might undermine NATO and the EU, and that this would pave the way for the feared Russian great power aspirations, allowing it to extend its zone of influence.

Framing the discussion on a new European security order in the context of Russia's attempts to undermine Western institutions misses the point that repairing the fragility of the current system is in the West's interest too, if it wants to prevent any further deterioration of the crisis directly affecting its own security. As Ivan Krastev argued as far back as 2008, acting as a “fervent guardian of the post-Cold War *status quo*”, risks “total collapse of the institutional infrastructure of post-Cold War.”<sup>10</sup>

The argument that a modified order may benefit one side at the expense of the other neglects the fact that any amendments would be the result of compromise of all sides, rather than unilaterally imposed by one side. Negotiating a new deal does not mean that the West must abandon the principles and norms it embraces, dissolve existing institutions, and surrender to Russia's requests. Any changes would have to be acceptable to all sides and would require the security concerns and interests of all to be taken into account.

When discussing the necessity of a revised European security order, or the lack thereof, one must not forget that there are other players in the game too, and that this is not only about guaranteeing Russia and the West's interests. In fact, the current standoff between Russia and the West has

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<sup>10</sup> Krastev, Ivan: The crisis of the post-Cold War European order. What to do about Russia's newfound taste for confrontation with the West. Brussels Forum Paper Series. The German Marshall Fund of the United States. March 2008.

broad implications for the security and stability of the whole OSCE area. Since there is a greater risk that Russia and the West will play out their rivalry in regions where their interests clash than that they will engage in a direct military confrontation on each other's territories, the countries located between Russia and the West are particularly exposed to their geopolitical competition. Countries in this region dealing with protracted conflicts are particularly exposed to the heightened tensions between Russia and Western countries.

In light of the direct implications of the current crisis for countries in the South Caucasus, as well as other countries located between Russia and the West, it is imperative that these states are engaged in negotiations on a future European security order. Making decisions about the future of countries in this region – which will have to be addressed in negotiations on a revised model of European security – behind their back is unthinkable.

Achieving progress on common European security requires a holistic and strategic approach that encompasses both immediate de-escalatory mechanisms at both political and military levels in order to prevent further deterioration of the crisis, as well as long-term objectives. While risk mitigation is the most urgent and primary task, discussions on a new pan-European security order must run in parallel.

The OSCE is the platform for these efforts. With its inclusive nature and the instruments at its disposal, the OSCE has considerable potential to function as both a mechanism to prevent escalation in the political and military sphere, and to act as a facilitator and stimulus for the development of an equal and indivisible pan-European security order. The Structured Dialogue (SD; Structured Dialogue Process on the Current and Future Challenges and Risks to Security in the OSCE Area), a format launched by the German OSCE chairmanship during the annual OSCE Ministerial Council in December 2016, with the aim of discussing security issues, is a unique opportunity to push the process of negotiations on European security forwards.

## **Immediate Action Plan: Avoiding Black Swans, Increasing Predictability**

A black swan is a metaphor for an event that occurs rarely, is of large magnitude, with extreme impact and retrospective predictability.<sup>11</sup> The failure to foresee or at least prevent a black swan can have disastrous effects. Anticipating possible scenarios, conceiving the inconceivable in the development of the current crisis, is key for limiting any further damage that an event, decision, or action could trigger and thereby minimising the risk of escalation. Therefore, in light of present tensions, Russia and the West must undertake efforts to ensure the confrontation over current issues that is fuelling the crisis – including military tensions in the Baltic and Black Sea, the Ukraine conflict, and the situation in Syria – does not escalate at a political and/or military level through miscalculation and poor decisions. The OSCE should provide a platform for discussing these issues and enabling adoption of practical steps that will minimise the risk of both political and military escalation in the short term, such as the following:

*Firstly*, since the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) meets rarely and has not proven fruitful, the OSCE should provide the opportunity for military personnel from NATO allies and Russia to convene in urgent cases of military incidents and accidents, as well as in the event of a tense situation that risks escalation. While the prospect of a direct military confrontation between Russia and NATO member states in Europe is rather low, given that bearing the heavy costs of entanglement in a hot war in Europe is in the interests of neither Russia nor the West, in Syria, the risk of such a scenario is more profound. Still, regardless of whether the risk of an escalation through misperception or miscalculation is real or not, both sides must have the possibility to convene immediately in case an accident occurs. The probability of occurrence of accidents and incidents is high indeed in view of the increased number of closed encounters between Russian and NATO member states' warships and aircrafts since the onset of the Ukraine crisis.

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<sup>11</sup> See: Taleb, Nassim Nicholas: *The Black Swan. The Impact of the Highly Improbable.* Penguin Books: London 2007.

*Secondly*, an agreement must be found to de-escalate the situation between Russia and NATO allies in Syria. The recent airstrikes that the US, the UK, and France launched in Syria as a reaction to the alleged chemical weapons attack on civilians conducted by the Assad regime were limited, directed at chemical weapons facilities, and have not been followed by a response from Russia, contrary to what Moscow warned of before the strikes. Nevertheless, the risk of an escalation and military confrontation between Russia and the United States persists. In a situation in which Russian forces could be killed as a result of further Western attacks in Syria, Moscow's response could be different than in the case of the recent strikes, when it decided not to act. It does not take much to imagine the sequence of events that could follow.

*Thirdly*, breaking the deadlock in Ukraine is an urgent matter. The Ukraine crisis will continue to affect Russia-West relations profoundly, and will have long-term effects on the European security environment if it remains unresolved. As the Minsk II agreement, which was signed by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine three years ago, has still not been implemented, the immediate goal must be to find a way to break the stalemate in negotiations, instead of merely insisting on the implementation of the agreement, which is wishful thinking under the current circumstances. In light of the current deadlock, the idea of a UN peacekeeping mission in the Donbass must be seriously discussed. Part of the discussions should focus on – besides technical matters including its composition, size, and scope – how such a peacekeeping force might be helpful in finding a sustainable solution to the conflict in the longer term. The instalment of a UN peacekeeping force alone will not resolve the Ukraine crisis. UN peacekeepers are not a panacea for either the stalled implementation of Minsk II, or for Kiev's domestic problems, the latter of which require significant reforms by Ukrainian authorities. Nevertheless, in view of the current deadlock in negotiations and stakeholders' accumulating fatigue, a discussion over the proposal could give the diplomatic process new impetus. Since all actors that are engaged in negotiations over the Ukraine conflict are participants of the OSCE, the organisation provides the right platform for such discussions.

*Fourthly*, Western states and Russia must agree to suspend efforts to further enlarge their institutions in the 'shared neighbourhood' in the immediate

future, before any lasting solution to the integration dilemma has been found. A reciprocal commitment from both Russia and the West not to offer the ‘states-in-between’ the perspective of membership would allow for a reduction in tensions and allow for broader negotiations to take place on the future of integration projects.

### **Revitalising the Debate on Common European Security: Addressing Core Security Matters**

As has been argued throughout this paper, addressing sensitive security-related issues, the disagreement over who is responsible for the erosion of the European security order, is essential in order to resolve the various security dilemmas and to build a more common and cooperative European security order. To reiterate, in order to revive the vision of common and cooperative security, no organisation provides a better forum for negotiations on the future of pan-European security than the OSCE. The OSCE is the largest and truly inclusive regional security organization and has a proven record of successfully mediating conflicts. The swift action of the OSCE took at the initial stage of the Ukraine crisis by establishing the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in September 2014, which has helped monitor compliance of the Minsk agreement, confirmed the organisation’s relevance as an effective security mechanism.

In order to make sure that the process of building a cooperative European security order is not doomed to fail from scratch, the negotiations must be planned and organised in a strategic manner with a clearly defined long-term agenda including topics to be discussed and objectives to be achieved. In parallel to discussions between national representatives of permanent missions to the OSCE, workshops and seminars could be organised at the OSCE in which experts, including those on international law, would provide the necessary expertise as a basis for negotiations. Equally important to strategic planning is leadership. The process of revising the pan-European security order should be driven by European countries such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, all of which have successfully contributed to the revival of the OSCE during their recent chairmanships and have a proven record as bridge builders between the East and West. The credibility as mediators of the latter two is additionally enhanced by their neutral status.

Topics that need particular attention in these negotiations include military transparency, the dilemma of European vs. Eurasian integration, the future status of ‘countries in-between’, protracted conflicts in the OSCE area, arms control, the US anti-ballistic missile programme, and possibilities for cooperation between NATO and CSTO.

### *Reviving Politico-Military Dialogue*

While immediate steps are important in order to reduce current tensions and prevent escalation, military transparency must also remain a long-term task. Stagnating dialogue on military matters between Russia and NATO allies reduces transparency and increases mutual suspicion of respective intentions and undertakings. With its set of ‘confidence and security building measures’ (CSBMs) and arms control arrangements, the OSCE has the potential to substantially contribute to increasing military transparency and confidence-building between Russia and NATO allies.

Of particular importance is the aforementioned Structured Dialogue (SD; Structured Dialogue Process on the Current and Future Challenges and Risks to Security in the OSCE Area). One important task that OSCE-participating states have undertaken in the framework of the SD and which will increase transparency and understanding of respective military activities and intentions is the so-called “mapping exercise.” This is a systematic analysis of trends in military force postures and military exercises.

Discussion within the Structured Dialogue can also help overcome the deadlock in efforts to modernise existing OSCE agreements that contain relevant risk reduction and confidence-building mechanisms. One example is the modernisation of the Treaty on Open Skies, which permits unarmed aerial surveillance flights over the territory of the 34 signatory states. Another example of particular interest is the Vienna Document on Confidence and Security Building Measures, a politically binding mechanism that aims to build mutual trust through military openness and transparency.

The Vienna Document includes information sharing on military forces, equipment and defence planning, as well as on-site inspections and evaluation visits to the territory of every participating state. Adopted in 1990 by all OSCE-participating states, the agreement was updated in 1992, 1994,



1999, and 2011, in accordance with the changing security environment. However, modernising the provisions for early warning, conflict prevention, and crisis management is an ongoing process, hence the Vienna Document 2011 (VD11) needs further updates. The need to modernise the VD11 which results from changing dynamics in the security environment, including the use of new military technologies, and has been on the table of the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) – the body responsible for this matter within the OSCE – for some time.

The Structured Dialogue could potentially provide an incentive for the creation of a new and comprehensive conventional arms control regime based on, but not limited to, the Adapted Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), which may itself never be revitalised. The erosion of arms control agreements risks further deterioration of East-West relation, leading to serious implications for wider European and global security. Although arms control might not be a remedy for easing the tensions between Russia and the transatlantic community, any progress could help foster predictability regarding the actions of both sides and create an atmosphere of trust. As Frank-Walter Steinmeier accurately put it, “arms control agreements (...) are not the result of existing trust – they are a means to build trust where it has been lost.”<sup>12</sup>

### *‘States in-between’*

The outbreak of the Ukraine crisis showed that the unresolved question over the future orientation of the ‘states in-between’ remains the main source of disagreement between Russia and the West. Building a consensus on possible security arrangements and the status of non-aligned countries located between Russia and the EU is therefore a key prerequisite for moving from confrontation to cooperation in Russia-West relations, and enhancing these countries’ security. Negotiations over the future of states whose status is contested must involve all ‘states in-between’, as well as Russia and the “collective West.”

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<sup>12</sup> Steinmeier, Frank-Walter: More security for everyone in Europe: A call for a re-launch of arms control. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 26 August 2016.

It is evident that unilateral enlargement of either Western or Russian institutions has reached its end. Any future attempts to influence the geopolitical orientation of the 'states in-between' that have not defined their status yet, with the aim of creating a closed 'ring of friends', would exacerbate tensions between Russia and the West. Most importantly, it would threaten the stability and territorial integrity of the countries concerned, instead of improving their security. Creating new, institutionalised security structures, such as the so-called Intermarium Military Coalition that would encompass NATO and non-NATO countries in Central and Eastern Europe – as proposed by Andreas Umland and Konstantyn Fedorenko – would have a detrimental effect on the security of the whole of Europe. Instead of "improving the balance of power against Russia",<sup>13</sup> as the Intermarium concept aims for, arrangements are needed that are based on the principle of indivisible security, i.e. the idea that the security of one state is inextricably linked to the security of all. In view of the disagreement between Russia and the West over Ukraine, a possible scenario for the future status of some of these states that deserves serious consideration is formalised non-alignment and neutrality, taking into account the specific needs and possibilities of each country concerned.

That said, policies based on principles of non-alignment or neutrality should not prevent the 'states in-between' having close political and economic ties with both Russia and the West. Arrangements that would allow 'states in-between' to integrate with both Russia and the West would make the need to manoeuvre between the two redundant, and solve their 'integration dilemma' in the long-term. Clarity over the status of these states, based on consensus between Russia and the West, would allow the 'states in-between' to formulate long-term policies as opposed to opportunistic *ad hoc* decisions based on incentives from either side at a particular moment of time. This in turn would positively contribute to their prosperity and security over the long term.

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<sup>13</sup> Fedorenko, Konstantyn and Umland, Andreas: How to solve Ukraine's security dilemma? The idea of an Intermarium Coalition in East-Central Europe. War on the Rocks. (30 August 2017) <<https://warontherocks.com/2017/08/how-to-solve-ukraines-security-dilemma-the-idea-of-an-intermarium-coalition-in-east-central-europe/>>, accessed on 01.10.2018.

However, in order to guarantee their simultaneous integration, closer interaction is needed between NATO and the CSTO, and the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Rivalry-driven thinking, which has prevented any joint activities between the respective institutions so far, must be replaced by a spirit of cooperation.

Negotiations on the future of ‘states in-between’ must be embedded within a broader discussion on the conflict and interrelationship between principles of: territorial integrity vs. self-determination; protecting human rights vs. non-interference; sovereignty vs. humanitarian intervention; and the right of a state to freely choose a security alliance vs. the concept of indivisible security. It is through this broader discussion that principles of regional stability can be guaranteed. Also, discussions on the role and content of the principle of equal and indivisible security, as well as the security doctrines of institutions on both sides are necessary.

## **Conclusion**

Moving beyond the stalemate in the crisis of the European security order will require revising the current order and solving security-related matters that are at the very heart of the crisis. Finding consensus on contentious security issues and moving towards building a common and cooperative security order will not be an easy task. The lack of agreement within the political community on the need to modify the current system is the first hurdle towards materialising the vision of pan-European security. Yet, it seems that a critical review and revision of the European security order is not a matter of choice, but one of necessity. Acknowledging this will require intense diplomatic efforts and encouragement from the academic and expert community, which should lead to a change in thinking. Moving beyond old patterns reminiscent of the “Cold War bloc-mentality” that have guided the decisions and actions that led to the current crisis, is a *sine qua non* for negotiations on the future of the European security order and solving the present crisis. As Albert Einstein sagely said, “we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

# Changing Characteristics of the European Security Order and Possibilities for Enhancing Predictability in the South Caucasus

*Oktaf F. Tanrısever*

## Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the changing characteristics of the European security order in the aftermath of the ongoing confrontation between Russia and the Western countries over the annexation of Crimea and the secessionist conflict in Eastern Ukraine since late 2013. The chapter also intends to explore the main implications of those security developments for the South Caucasus. Last, but not least, this paper also aims at discussing the possibilities for enhancing predictability in the South Caucasus.

The main argument of this chapter could be stated as follows: Contrary to the views of some analysts who believe that the strengthening of enforcement tools of international law could enhance security and predictability in Europe, this chapter argues that the strengthening of the pan-European diplomatic frameworks is likely to be more effective in enhancing security and predictability in the South Caucasus, as well as in the other parts of the wider Europe. In fact, diplomacy and pragmatism rather than international law and enforcement mechanisms could contribute to bridging the increasingly divergent European security perceptions and visions of Russia and the Western countries. In an international environment where the trust in common governing rules is eroding for a variety of reasons the European rules-based order, a more pragmatic, diplomatic and inclusive approach is needed in order to make the South Caucasus and the rest of the Wider Europe more predictable, stable and secure.

This paper is organized into three main sections in addition to this introduction and the final conclusions. Accordingly, this introductory section is followed by an examination of the main characteristics of the emerging European security order in the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis in 2013. Next, this paper identifies the major implications of the emerging Europe-

an security order for the South Caucasus. Afterwards, the paper analyses the roles and limits of international law and of pan-European as well as regional institutional diplomatic frameworks in enhancing security and predictability in the South Caucasus. The conclusion discusses the main findings.

### **Characteristics of the Emerging European Security Order in Europe**

All international and regional security orders, including the Cold War and the post-Cold War security orders in Europe, are historically and socially constructed. In other words, regional security orders do experience change and transformation if the socio-historical and international dynamics which led to the formation of these security orders change too. Therefore, new socio-historical and international dynamics result eventually in the emergence or socio-historical construction of new international and regional security orders.

The post-Cold war European security order, which was constructed in the aftermath of the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the fall of the East European communist regimes as well as the break-up of the Soviet Union, has been experiencing a major crisis since the European Union (EU) and the Russian-dominated Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) as the two major regional integration processes started to confront each other over the control of Eastern Europe since the early 2010s.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the outbreak of the Russian-backed insurgency in Eastern Ukraine marked the collapse of the post-Cold war European security order in 2014. In fact, these developments marked the weakening of the European security order, since the other European countries have failed to prevent Russia from breaching a fundamental European normative security principle which is the prohibition of changing international borders by force.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oktay F. Tanrisever, "EU's Eastern Partners and the Vilnius Summit: Opportunities Seized and Missed", *Turkish Policy Quarterly (TPQ)*, Vol.12, No.4, Winter 2014, pp. 99-107.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

A number of key factors have played a role in the eventual collapse of the post-Cold War regional security order in Europe. The normative and rules-based characters of the European regional security order have become increasingly less binding on Russia since post-Soviet Russian political system has diverged from the mainstream liberal democratic political orders in various parts of Europe, in general, and throughout the European Union. Since Russia has no realistic prospect of joining the European Union and adopting the mainstream liberal democratic European political values, these normative differences have deepened the divide and widened the gap between the security perceptions and visions of Russia and the other European countries considerably.<sup>3</sup>

The reluctance of Moscow to align its security perceptions with those of the other European countries and Russia's failure to adopt the liberal normative principles and values of the European countries played an important role in the weakening of the post-Cold war European security order. Although various proposals, including the Meseberg Memorandum and the Medvedev Treaty have been made for reforming the legal and institutional security architecture in Europe, these proposals have failed due to the different perceptions of Russia and the other European actors regarding the sources of security threats and the appropriate responses to the key security challenges.<sup>4</sup>

The most successful of these initiatives seems to be the creation of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in 2002. Extraordinarily, the NRC equalized Russia's voting power with the voting powers of the individual NATO member states in its decision-making structure. Despite the effectiveness and the relatively smooth functioning of the NRC in countering terrorist threats in the post 9/11 world and in coping with the security challenges in Afghanistan, the eventual suspension of the NRC activities in the aftermath

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<sup>3</sup> See Kupchan, Charles, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Weitz, "The Rise and Fall of Medvedev's European Security Treaty", *On Wider Europe*, May 2012, Available online at <[http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwip5eDXs9\\_bAhUCiKYKHZkODWsQFggnMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gmfus.org%2Ffile%2F2657%2Fdownload&usg=AOvVaw2TrOHmU75kdkdyzafmoSpg](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwip5eDXs9_bAhUCiKYKHZkODWsQFggnMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gmfus.org%2Ffile%2F2657%2Fdownload&usg=AOvVaw2TrOHmU75kdkdyzafmoSpg)>, accessed on 4 June 2018.

of the Ukrainian crisis have demonstrated its ineffectiveness in institutionalizing security cooperation between Russia and the NATO countries.<sup>5</sup>

The economic factor also contributed to the collapse of the post-Cold War regional security order in Europe. In fact, the ongoing economic crises in relatively weaker economies of the Mediterranean or in Southern Europe has led to the weakening of the European regional security order since not only it widened the gap between the northern and southern parts of the EU, but it also weakened the EU's influence and attractiveness or soft power in the European borderlands where the EU was competing with Russia for regional predominance.

In such a regional security context in Europe, the current security order seems to be characterized mainly by uncertainty, unpredictability and instability. Accordingly, Luis Simón describes the current characteristics of the security situation in Europe as follows:

Today, the international system is characterised by the (re-)emergence of several great powers, but also by state fragility, a surge in non-state violence, shifting national boundaries, and greater geopolitical volatility.<sup>6</sup>

This demonstrates that while the post-Cold War security order in Europe has been weakened considerably, it has not been replaced by a more viable European security order yet. In the absence of a viable European security order, regional security challenges have become increasingly difficult to bear by the small states, including the South Caucasian states, which had to cope with increased security risks and threats. Therefore, it is important to discuss the implications of the changing characteristics of the European security order for the South Caucasian countries, as well as of the regional security situation in the South Caucasus.

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<sup>5</sup> Oktay F. Tanrisever, Ed., *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11*, Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Luis Simón, "Balance and Order in Europe", *Whitehall Papers*, Vol.90, No.1, pp. 8-29, at p. 22.

## **Implications of the Emerging European Security Order for the South Caucasus**

The weakening of the post-Cold War European security order has direct implications for the South Caucasus. During the post-Cold War period, it was the South Caucasus and the other borderlands of Europe, which have been the potential sources of instability, unpredictability as well as security risks for the European security order since these borderland regions have not fully adopted a set of shared European principles, values and norms about regional security in Europe. Accordingly, the European security order has been guiding the security behaviour of the core European security actors. On the other hand, the peripheral security actors such as those in the South Caucasus have been expected to adopt and internalize these value-based security order in order to enhance their own security.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the ongoing confrontation between Russia and the Western countries over the annexation of Crimea and the secessionist conflict in Eastern Ukraine are likely to have direct implications for the South Caucasus not only because of its geographical proximity to the South Caucasus region, but also because of the conflicting regional interests of Russia and the Western powers, as well as the fragile character of the frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus.

The weakening of the security order in Europe has worsened already challenging security situation in the South Caucasus. In the worsening regional security context, the South Caucasian countries find it more difficult to pursue their existing policies on the ethno-territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus; namely, the conflicts over Abkhazia, the South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Nevertheless, the South Caucasian countries tend to adopt more uncompromising and more conflictual, rather than accommodating, approaches to the conflict resolution process regarding these ethno-territorial conflicts due to their increased sense of insecurity in the South Caucasus and the Wider Europe.

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<sup>7</sup> See Diehl Paul F., and Joseph Lepgold , Eds., *Regional Conflict Management*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.



Generally speaking, Russia and the Western countries could prioritize the management of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In this respect, Sergei Markedonov thinks that there are realistic prospects for its peaceful settlement since the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chair members, including the United States, France and Russia, could cooperate in the management of this conflict and the prevention of its further escalation. If these great powers reached a consensus over the management of this conflict, they could extend this cooperation to other areas where they had common interests.<sup>8</sup>

Although this is a very promising perspective for the settlement, or at least the management of this conflict, this approach seems to be too optimistic and neglects the importance of regional security trends in the South Caucasus, and the changes in the public opinion in Armenia and Azerbaijan, which seem to be hardening rather than softening their stances on both the management and the settlement of this conflict.

Although the conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia seem to be frozen, there is no guarantee that the possible changes in the status of these conflict zones will not lead to the deterioration of the security situation in these ethno-territorial conflict zones too. The potential risk of unification between the South Ossetia and the North Ossetia within the framework of the Russian Federation and the increase in the number of states which recognized the independence of Abkhazia and the South Ossetia (like the recent recognition by Syria) could worsen the security situation and lead to further escalation of these conflicts. Equally, Georgia's potential membership in NATO and deepening of its integration with the EU could also lead to escalation in these conflict zones due to Russia's very rigid position on Georgia's relations with the NATO and EU.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Sergei Markedonov, "A Post-Soviet Anomaly: How Karabakh Could Bring Russia and the West Together," 10 October 2017, available online at <<http://carnegie.ru/commentary/73335>>, accessed on 4 June 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Judy Dempsey, "Georgia's NATO, EU, and Russia Challenge," Carnegie Europe, June 20, 2016, available online at <<http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/63845>>, accessed on 4 June 2018.

The weakness of the prospects for development of a more sustainable and resilient regional security order in Europe lowers the South Caucasian expectations for the normalization of their relations with the neighbours too. Although all of the South Caucasian states and their neighbours have a lot to gain from the normalization of their relations, the worsening regional and international security situation lowers the public support for the normalization processes, since such security environment strengthens the position of hardliners throughout the South Caucasus.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note that another important security implication of the weakening European security order for the South Caucasus seems to be the growing systemic uncertainty about the parameters of the emerging European security order. It is not clear yet what additional security risks could be created for the small South Caucasian countries when the new European security order is created. At this point it is important to discuss the roles and limits of international law and of the pan-European, as well as regional diplomatic frameworks in enhancing security and predictability in the South Caucasus.

### **Role and Limits of International Law in Enhancing Security and Predictability in the South Caucasus**

Potentially, the South Caucasian countries as well as their partners in the Wider Europe have various tools at their disposal in order to enhance regional security and increase the predictability in the South Caucasus. These tools include international law, as well as the pan-European or regional institutional diplomatic frameworks for resolving as well as for managing conflicts and promoting regional cooperation among the South Caucasian countries.

Clearly, international law has been one of the most important instruments for resolving conflicts in international relations. Although, states tend to breach international legal principles when they are able to do so, in excep-

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<sup>10</sup> Oktay F. Tanrisever, "Azerbaijan's Political Economy and Foreign Policy in 2015", *Regional Security Issues: 2015*, Ed. Gayane Novikova, Erevan: Spectrum, 2016, pp. 114-127.

tional situations, in general they either comply with international legal principles strictly or pretend that their actions are in line with certain legal documents if not all of the legal documents on a specific issue-area.

Nevertheless, international law has a very limited role in the management of ethno-territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus due to the diametrically opposed implications of two major international legal principles. These conflicting principles are the territorial integrity of states and the principle of self-determination. Regarding these conflicts, Georgia and Azerbaijan emphasize the territorial integrity of states principle, while Armenia prioritizes the principle of self-determination. Therefore, it is very unrealistic to develop solutions to these ethno-territorial conflicts by using the instruments of international law. Likewise, the prioritization of one principle over the other one seems unlikely to be accepted by the majority of stakeholders in regional security in the South Caucasus. It is also unrealistic for the great powers to increase predictability of regional security actors in the South Caucasus by enforcing certain international legal principles and norms since such enforcements could be resisted by the local actors for different reasons and they are not likely to be sustainable in the long-term.<sup>11</sup>

The prospects for the adoption of a new and modernized version of Helsinki Final Act of 1975 are also very limited. In fact, the Helsinki Final Act was made possible by the ideological relaxation of bloc politics of the Cold War bipolar international system.<sup>12</sup> At present, there are no major ideological confrontations between Russia and the Western powers. Russia's challenge stems from its geopolitical ambitions. Secondly, the prospects for a relaxed bipolar international system are very low. In fact, international security actors debate the feasibility and sustainability of either the unipolar

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<sup>11</sup> For alternative views on the usefulness of enforced settlements and coercive diplomacy, see Jentleson, Bruce W. *Coercive Prevention: Normative, Political, and Policy Dilemmas*, Washington, D.C.: USIP, 2000; and George, Alexander L., and William E. Simons, Eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> "Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe Final Act", Helsinki 1975, available online at <<https://www.osce.org/helsinki-final-act?download=true>>, accessed on 4 June 2018.

international system, characterized by the leadership of the United States or the multipolar international system, characterized by the coexistence of multiple centres of power, including the United States, the European Union, Russia, and China.

Although it is unrealistic to reach consensus on a comprehensive legal document to regulate security relations in both the South Caucasus and the rest of the Wider Europe, it is possible for great powers and regional actors to reach a consensus on pragmatic legal arrangements in specific issue areas, such as confidence building measures, where all sides have their own relative gains, but not absolute gains.

This very pragmatic win-win approach to international legal arrangements demonstrates the importance of international diplomacy and of pan-European as well as regional diplomatic frameworks in enhancing security and predictability in the South Caucasus. In fact, it is a widely shared view that preventive diplomacy is a very effective tool for managing international conflicts.<sup>13</sup>

As Adam Watson argues, diplomacy is an effective tool for the management of not only order, but also change. Watson elaborates this view on the function of diplomacy in managing change as follows:

In these circumstances the central task of diplomacy is not just the management of order, but the management of change, and the maintenance by continual persuasion of order in the midst of change. If the diplomatic dialogue is to succeed in this task, it and the statesmen who conduct it must be flexible, ready for new compromises, willing to make constant adjustments. The most characteristic diplomatic concept is the balance – the multiple, constantly shifting mobile of pressures that no rigidity, no dogma, no institution, no canon of law can hold up for long, but

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<sup>13</sup> Cahill, Kevin, M. (ed.). *Preventive Diplomacy: Stopping Wars Before They Start*. New York: Basic Books, 1996; Zartman, I. *William Preventive Negotiation*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001; Steiner Barry H., *Collective Preventive Diplomacy: A Study in International Conflict Management*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2004.

that can be adequately maintained in balance by continual adjustment. as well as the maintenance by continued persuasion of order in the midst of change.<sup>14</sup>

International institutions and various regional security organizations in Europe could play a valuable role in managing regional security risks and in enhancing the security dialogue among the regional stakeholders for developing comprehensive, sustainable and resilient security frameworks, and institutions in the South Caucasus and in the Wider Europe. In this respect, it is very important to highlight the crucial role which could be played by international security institutions, such as NATO, EU and the OSCE.<sup>15</sup>

Luis Simón thinks that the European security order could be restored through enhancing the roles of regional security institutions. He thinks that NATO could play a more effective role in enhancing European security than the EU as follows:

The health of Europe's institutions is a critical factor in maintaining order in Europe. While NATO appears to have regained its energy and focus following Russia's seizure of Crimea, the same cannot be said for the EU. Divisions in the EU related to the migration crisis, the Eurozone crisis and Brexit are pulling EU institutions in different directions.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, some experts from the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) remain optimistic about the potential relevance of EU's current security-building role in promoting a rules-based European security order. For example, Anthony Dworkin and Mark Leonard argue that,

The EU is heavily invested in the idea of a rules-based international order. The Union exemplifies the belief that states are most able to prosper through cooperation, openness, and a rule of law that incorporates a commitment to democracy and human rights. The EU's international standing is linked to the credibility of the principles it embodies. More practically, European countries want an international order that protects them from external threats and allows them to promote their

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<sup>14</sup> Watson, Adam, *Diplomacy: The Dialogue between States*, London: Methuen, 1984, p. 216.

<sup>15</sup> See Lake, David A. "Beyond Anarchy: The Importance of Security Institutions." *International Security*, No. 26, 2001, pp. 129-160; Carr, Fergus and Theresa Callan, *Managing Conflict in the New Europe: The Role of International Institutions*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Luis Simón, "Balance and Order in Europe", *Whitehall Papers*, Vol.90, No.1, pp. 8-29 at p. 29.

economic interests through worldwide trade and investment. European public policy is committed to the principle that multilateralism is the best way to create global public goods. Given these positions, the EU has good reason to be concerned about the condition of the liberal order, and to develop policies that aim to restore or preserve the order's most important elements.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to NATO and EU, the OSCE could also play a very constructive role in the emergence of a new European security order. Unlike NATO and the EU, all major stakeholders in European and Eurasian security, including the South Caucasian countries, are members of the OSCE. It could be possible to build a different, but complementary, rule-based regional security order for the core European and wider European states within the framework of OSCE by responding to differentiated security concerns through institutionalized frameworks.<sup>18</sup> Put it differently, the OSCE, as an inclusive and pan-European diplomatic framework, could complement the security-building roles of NATO and EU by enhancing predictability and regional stability in the South Caucasus and in the other parts of the Wider Europe, where Russia opposes a greater role of NATO and EU.

## Conclusion

To sum up, the analysis in this paper demonstrates that the European security order has been undergoing a major transformation since the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis in late 2013. Although it is clear that the rules-based character of the European security order is not sustainable, the full characteristics of the emerging European security order remain to be seen.

Another important finding of this paper is that during the current *integrum* between a very predictable post-Cold war order and the emerging new security order in Europe, the European countries, including those in the South Caucasus have to innovate novel ways of coping with the increased

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<sup>17</sup> Dworkin, Anthony and Leonard, Mark, "Can Europe save the world order?" May 2018, available online at <[http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/can\\_europe\\_save\\_the\\_world\\_order.pdf](http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/can_europe_save_the_world_order.pdf)>, accessed on 4 June 2018, pp. 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> See Terrence Hopmann, P., "Managing Conflict in Post-Cold War Eurasia: The Role of the OSCE in Europe's Security 'Architecture'", *International Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2003, pp. 75-100.

levels of uncertainty, unpredictability and unreliability in the South Caucasus and the rest of the European continent.

This paper also emphasized that although international law plays an essential role in enhancing security and predictability in the South Caucasus, the emerging European security order weakens the effectiveness of international legal instruments and also the possibilities for enforcing international legal principles and norms.

As the main argument of this paper has put forward, the analysis shows that it is getting more important to strengthen the roles and effectiveness of the existing pan-European diplomatic frameworks, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for enhancing predictability and regional stability in the South Caucasus and the other parts of the Wider Europe.

All in all, it could be stated that the current dynamics of increasing insecurity, instability and transformation require all stakeholders of European security, in general, and the South Caucasus, in particular, to be more flexible, pragmatic and also more diplomatic in coping with the current international and regional challenges of unpredictability, instability and insecurity in the South Caucasus and the Wider Europe.

# The Foreign Policy Option of Western Countries Regarding *de facto* States in the post-Soviet Space

*Michael Eric Lambert*<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The study of international relations has historically focused on the activities of large and powerful states and considered *de facto* states in post-Soviet space to be geopolitical “anomalies” resulting from a fight between Russia and the US/Europe (EU). *De facto* or partially recognized states (e.g. Abkhazia and South Ossetia) are regarded neither like a full part of the international system nor sustainable enough to apply the Montevideo Convention. However, five states out of the six members of the Eastern Partnership have to deal with separatist entities. With the Donbas in 2015, the proliferation of such territories provided a significant challenge to international organizations such as the European Union, NATO, or the OSCE, just to name a few.

Is Russia using separatism to slow down EU enlargement or trying to protect minorities in a chaotic post-Soviet order? Moreover, are EU member states realistic when it comes to the lack of legitimacy of *de facto* states and how they could be integrated in the European order without recognition?

This article will address the issue of *de facto*/partially recognized states and provide some original ideas to integrate them into the post-Soviet European order without any diplomatic recognition.

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## The Foreign Policy Option of Western Countries Regarding *de facto* States in the post-Soviet Space

The proliferation of unrecognized/partially recognized<sup>2</sup> states is a significant challenge to the international system and international institutions in which the participants are states. Countries currently not recognized are at issue to apply international law, human rights, animal rights, environmental standards, and basically every kind of law. Moreover, it is impossible for the inhabitants themselves to enjoy basic freedoms or to receive help from the outside world. Most of them have to hold another passport (so called passportization from a parent state), and cannot apply for recognition of education, jobs, visa to travel, and many other basic things without it.

The talk about the critical situation for inhabitants comes after the talks on security issues and experts have the tendency to forget that all *de facto* states have inhabitants, whether citizens or not, living there for a long time. Another issue probably is the instrumentalization of the populations by the Kremlin seeking military outposts in post-Soviet space.

Nonetheless, organization such as the OSCE, NATO, and European institutions are continuously asking for the Russian troops/peacekeepers to withdraw, not having any backup plan if they decide to do so. What would happen to the Abkhaz people or the Transnistrians if Moscow decides to let them alone, remains a major concern.

Neither the OSCE, nor the West in general is able to protect inhabitants without any citizenship against a sudden attack from abroad. In that context, Russian “peacekeepers” are ensuring the safety of Soviet warehouses and inhabitants at least as long as nobody will offer a better and more effective solution.

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<sup>2</sup> In this text, we will use the expression “unrecognized” to characterize all *de facto* states including those partially recognized (e.g. Abkhazia and Kosovo) to make it easier to read. Nonetheless, we would like to stress that we are not taking any position regarding any *de facto* countries, whether they have been recognized by Russia or any country from the West, or even China.

In summary, and because *de facto* states are probably not about to disappear in the next few years, we have to see if they are able to sustain themselves and how to include them without any recognition. Non-recognition is a major geopolitical issue, but respect of human rights is another one.

### *Are de facto States Sustainable?*

The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, signed in 1933, states that “the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.” According to this definition, most, if not all, *de facto* states can claim a recognition. The main issue is the “capacity to enter into relations with the other parties” as it includes a will from the already recognized states to do so. Nonetheless, all *de facto* states are trying to get in touch with other countries – at least with the most significant ones – and have been recognized by other non-recognized countries. We should underline, that countries are usually recognized or not for geopolitical reasons. The People’s Republic of China has been rejected by the international community except for the USSR for several years. France, mostly to show a diplomatic autonomy from the US after the Second World War, has been one of the first countries in the West to recognize it. The viability of China was obvious at the time, as it was the most populated country in the world and with a reliable government.

The non-recognition of smaller territories like Abkhazia and Transnistria, or even Kosovo, is mostly due to strategic reasons and to internal questions. Kosovo is still not recognized by Spain on grounds of the events in Catalonia more than anything else.

In the context of the Montevideo Convention, the only argument for objecting to a recognition would be the inability of a state to be sustainable and ensure the safety of future citizens. But even states recognized by the international community are sometimes not able to fulfil those standards.

Non-recognition of *de facto* governments that is related to their inability to sustain inhabitants should be considered carefully. For example, Abkhazia encompasses a land area of 8,660 square kilometres (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*

2017) and has a population of just over 235,000. A small territory, but of approximately the same size and population figure as Luxembourg after the Second World War. Estimations of Abkhazia's GDP and *per capita* income vary with the source but over most countries located in Africa. We should also keep in mind that around 60 percent of the income is not official, making Abkhazia a quite expensive state for tourists and inhabitants. Moreover, the business opportunities are impressive with the Soviet Riviera, oranges, wine, tea, tobacco, tomatoes, the largest wine caves in the world, and the only access point to connect Turkey and Russia. Abkhazia is also able to welcome space shuttles at the Sukhum/i airport and weather is not the only advantage. Renewable energies could also be developed and Abkhazia could become one of the main providers of solar energy during winters in Russia and the rest of the Caucasus.

Abkhazia is by far the most sustainable *de facto* state in post-Soviet space, but others, such as Transnistria, could also survive without help from the Kremlin. Transnistria is one of the main places for gas and goods going from Ukraine to Moldova and the EU and could apply some taxes on gas transit. The production of wine and cognac is another advantage and a success on the Chinese market. In the context of the New Silk Road (OBOR), *de facto* states have become of a major interest for exporting goods to China and settle companies at an affordable price.

*De facto* states less attractive to investors, like Karabakh and South Ossetia, have other assets like preserved mineral resources and good locations for winter tourism. Karabakh is also well located for religious tourism with the oldest Christian churches in the world. Overall, the whole Black Sea region is of strategic relevance for China and investments have increased in the last decade, with or without recognition.

One last aspect to take into consideration is the military aspect. With a large part of the GDP dedicated to defence, regions like Abkhazia, Transnistria, or even more Karabakh could instead invest into other infrastructures if they would be recognized.

The main argument in this part on *de facto* states is not to underline the potential prosperity of such regions, but to take into consideration the possibility that they could be an asset in the international system. Before the

breakup of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia was one of the most prosperous parts of the USSR and could be even more in the new international order by connecting Turkey and Russia via the railroad in a globalized economy.

## **Engagement with NGOs and Governmental Organizations**

### *With the USSR and the Russian Federation*

During Soviet times, Abkhazia was considered a part of the USSR with all functioning infrastructures – including an airport for space shuttles – and regarded as an example for the rest of the union. Nonetheless, the breakup of the Soviet Union led to the issue of international recognition and the argument that the “state” could not provide good living conditions for its inhabitants.

The same applies to Transnistria, one of the most industrialized areas in Moldova, Karabakh, with a successful mining sector, or even South Ossetia, which was mostly a place for vacations.

After 1991, the relationship between Russia and all *de facto* states<sup>3</sup> changed and Moscow was not officially in charge anymore. Nonetheless, Russia has been the one ensuring ceasefire in almost all territories except for Karabakh and has dominated *de facto* states’ foreign interactions since the termination of hostilities. Russian interaction has always been heavily influenced by structural factors, with the Russian position fluctuating in accordance with international developments outside of *de facto* states’ control. The Russian support has been the main reason for the autonomy of *de facto* states, including partial recognition, but also the main reason for the rejection by the international community.

Many other states oppose the idea of having new territories, because they themselves are afraid of separatism on their own land (like Scotland, Brittany, Basque Country, Catalonia, Bavaria, Silesia, Aaland Island, Wallonia, Sud Tyrol, Quebec, to name only a few). Another reason is the will to slow

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<sup>3</sup> Or about to become in the upcoming years.

down Russian soft power, as *de facto* states are usually pro-Russian or Russian speaking territories and not especially interested into EU/NATO membership on a short-term perspective.

In summary, Russian support was an asset after the breakup of the USSR, but today is an issue for *de facto* states. This idea is demonstrated by *de facto* states' attempts to be recognized by other countries or to develop economic ties with those countries, like Turkey in Abkhazia or China in Transnistria (cognac exports).

### *International Community*

When it comes to the international community, since the dissolution of the USSR, *de facto* states' official contacts with the international community have primarily taken place in connection with conflict resolution efforts vis-à-vis Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine. However the changing nature of this conflict has seen a corresponding evolution of international involvement. The recent tensions between the West and Russia after the recognition of Kosovo and the annexation/reattachment of Crimea in 2014 makes it almost impossible for any *de facto* state to seek further recognition by the International community. Moreover, the recognition is often connected to geopolitical or economic interests and *de facto* states cannot provide much compared to bigger countries.

The case of the United Nations reveals about the problems for *de facto* states to be taken seriously. The UN is, by its charter, committed to the territorial integrity of its members (United Nations Charter), immediately creating a bias in favour of already recognized territories in any negotiations initiated regarding the status of, or policy towards *de facto* states. This unavoidable position compromises the UN's role as a potential mediator in discussions on the status of all *de facto* states, not only in post-Soviet space, and strengthens the perceived dichotomy between the UN and the Russian Federation (Stewart 2003, 14). This restriction is apparent in the constant failure of *de facto* states officials to gain a platform at the UN. They are even unable to obtain a US visa to express themselves there (Gvinjia, 2013 Interview). The only country able to represent their interests is Russia, which is immediately perceived as the "occupant" of the territory or as being charge of *de facto* states. The impossibility for them to express themselves is

one of their main problems and a “pomme de discorde” between the West and Russia, especially when some *de facto* states are not in favour of Russia speaking for them (however, the case is different in Karabakh, which is willing to be represented by Armenia).

The situation with the EU is quite similar. As long as the European institutions will be involved in the Eastern Partnership, separatism will be perceived as an issue. Moreover, the intra-European “separatisms” or “regionalisms” are a major concern to the EU and the crisis in Catalonia in 2017 makes it impossible to support any regional autonomy. The lack of debate on more regionalism in the EU shows the difficulty for countries, even members of the EU, to accept regional autonomy and by projection for their partners. The question is not to support or not to support regionalism, but just to remember that it plays an important role in nowadays political life.

### NGOs

In that context, the authorities in *de facto* states are trying to get in touch with other countries, but not expecting full recognition but smaller advantages. Abkhazia is trying to make it possible for the brightest students to study in Italy, and Transnistria to have some products labelled “made in Moldova” to be able to export them abroad.

The most interesting for them would be a full recognition by China or states like Brazil, the only outsiders able to take position as they are not involved so much. But the chances for that are low and *de facto* states are more focused on NGOs than countries.

Why NGOs? It is easier to implement an ICRC office than an Embassy. NGOs are doing an important job outside of politics. Almost all *de facto* states have Médecins Sans Frontières or ICRC offices on their territory. Such offices are a way to communicate with the outside world, to bring people with a high salary on the ground – consuming goods and renting places – and organizing events for the inhabitants. The ICRC in Abkhazia is a good example of the positive outcome for *de facto* states. Reports are underlining the fact that Abkhazia is an open society with free internet and committed to respecting Human Rights. The ICRC’s office is also partici-

pating in major events in the territory and in organizing some to bring policymakers to the area. The outcome is highly valuable for *de facto* states, as they have the feeling of not being ignored and being members of the international system. It is also psychologically important for inhabitants to know that they can rely on the rest of the world and not only Russia when it comes to issues such as respecting Human Rights. The presence of people coming from foreign places like North America or the EU is also important, as many of them will come back to their countries and share a somehow quite different vision of what is happening on the ground, sometimes in complete opposition to the reports of the OSCE and even more of the EU Commission and NATO.

### *Informal Vectors*

The relationship between *de facto* states and other unofficial partners (e.g. Turkey in Abkhazia), despite the non-recognition, is important to understand the whole dynamic of unrecognized states. Turkey is inhibited from formally recognizing Abkhazia by its NATO membership and close relationship to the USA and the EU.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Turkey has maintained consistent and increasingly strong economic ties with Abkhazia. The Abkhaz issue has remained a political concern due to the activities of the Circassian/Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey. This informal but functional relationship stands in contrast to those formal but impractical treaties with Abkhazia's partners in the Pacific and Latin America.

Overall, states are involved for business activities in *de facto* states and sometimes use conflict to their advantage. China is investing in some strategic business sectors in Abkhazia and Transnistria as the price of gas is lower and the labour market more affordable. The same applies to the US mining companies in Karabakh.

We should keep in mind that *de facto* states are not a no man's land without any interest and can export some valuable goods (even more in the context

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Frear (2014) The foreign policy options of a small unrecognized state: the case of Abkhazia, *Caucasus Survey*, 1:2, 83-107, DOI: 10.1080/23761199.2014.11417293.

of the OBOR) and inhabitants are sometimes enjoying quite a good life. The situation varies between a rural life in South Ossetia to a more industrial state of mind in Transnistria. Nonetheless, the outside world is still very active, and tourism is even increasing in such territories. “Soviet Tours”, a new company, even offers a whole trip to all *de facto* states for curious adventurers. Other people are also crossing the *de facto* borders to enjoy some vacations on the border of the Black Sea or just to enjoy some rest in unusual places. Russian tourists are usual in Abkhazia and Transnistria, but the Chinese are getting more and more interested into the area, too. As tourism and “hipster” culture is developing, more people are going to Moldova and feel like they must go to Transnistria to enjoy a few days in the “land of the last Soviets.” We are far from mass tourism, but statistics are showing an increasing interest in unrecognized territories and an increase of tourism in Georgia and Ukraine is often connected to an increase of the numbers of tourists going to Abkhazia and Transnistria, too.

Business always finds its way, and even if McDonald’s cannot settle in Transnistria, other companies like Andy’s Pizza are not afraid to do so. The same applies to Australian burgers in Abkhazia. Overall, states and private companies are keeping a discreet eye on *de facto* states and are ready to take advantage of business opportunities as soon as the situation will change. Investing in housing in Abkhazia might be valuable if the country is recognized one day and some Chinese companies, like the one in charge of the Tbilisi Sea Plaza, are aware of that.

In summary, regarding informal vectors, foreign countries are involved even without recognition. The private sector, too, despite all restrictions, is keeping an eye on *de facto* states. If tourists are moving to the places, and business are settling in these areas, the question of security remains. For example, if something is happening to a French tourist in Karabakh, what would be the outcome? Will the non-recognized police of Karabakh oversee the investigation? Or will it be the Azeri police, who does not have access to the territory but is officially in charge? So far, *de facto* states and the international community do not have any security issues, but it might be valuable to adapt the approach to avoid another Malaysia Airlines Flight 17. The question of who is legally responsible remains: Ukraine, Russia, or the separatists?



## *Recognizing the Unrecognized as a Part of the European Order?*

*De facto* states may still be considered to be a geopolitical anomaly in post-Soviet space, but are the main issue when it comes to integration of parent countries into the EU/NATO and of a major concern for environmental issues, small arms trafficking, respect of human rights, etc. Out of the six states of the Eastern Partnership, five have to deal with such phenomenon and some for more than 25 years.

Far from being a “black hole”, such territories have developed an intense relationship with the rest of the world via informal businesses (e.g. Ferrero buying nuts for Nutella in Abkhazia) and are visited by an increasing number of tourists each year. The situation is not about to change as *de facto* states are of strategic relevance for the New Silk Road and able to provide China with resources such as alcohol and food.

In this context, it seems relevant to include *de facto* states into the European order and debate whether at the OSCE or during debates at the international stage. Such strategy is the only way to move forward (if EU institutions and international organizations want to do so) and provide a relevant debate on the future of the Eastern Partnership and the Eurasian Economic Union itself.

It seems complicated for the US/EU member states to recognize them, even if they fulfil the Montevideo Convention, but there are other mechanisms that could also provide a short-term solution. First, structures like the Alliance française, the Chambre de commerce, or even universities could install themselves in *de facto* states. Such an approach will have no consequences on recognition but will connect inhabitants to the West by providing them with the possibility to learn another foreign language than Russian and will increase US/EU’s soft power consequently. It would also create jobs and a deep knowledge about what is happening in those territories that can be used later by the states themselves.

Companies should also be allowed to settle in “grey areas” as it could lead to business opportunities and avoid Russian/Chinese economic influence. Resources in *de facto* states have been preserved since the break-up of the Soviet Union and could be a major asset.

The question of military involvement is, nonetheless, the main concern. It would be relevant to suggest to *de facto* states the settlement of peacekeepers from another country than Russia. Having peacekeepers from a non-NATO member state or the UN would be possible or at least renew dialogue about safety in the territories. It would be a strong signal of pragmatism from the West.

A research centre dedicated exclusively to the study of *de facto* states in the US or Europe would make sense but does not exist at the moment. Regarding the relevance of the topic, it seems necessary to develop one gathering experts from all around the world talking about such issues and providing high quality analysis detached from all national influence. Such structure seems to be necessary and not expensive to implement with headquarters located close to the Black Sea and including in the debate people from *de facto* states themselves.

Finally, the UN/NATO/OSCE, etc. should allow people from unrecognized countries to obtain a visa to at least go to the United Nations or international events to show the world their opinion. In each conflict you have to listen to both sides and it seems impossible to do that if you cannot even book a flight ticket. Moreover, we should think about the human aspect of such conflicts and not only geopolitical interests. *De facto* states have inhabitants and we should allow them to get a student visa for the European Union's universities (far more affordable compared to the US/Canada) and develop their skills and a western state of mind before they come home and get political positions (e.g. like in Italy for Abkhazian people). Education is one of the main components of western soft power and should not be neglected.

Should we recognize the unrecognized as a part of the European order? We may deny their legal right to exist, but disease, hunger, misery, and other human issues have no citizenship and states and non-states alike are relying on people living on the ground.

## **Conclusions**

It would be possible to have a wait-and-see policy like the last 25 years as *de facto* states are not a priority overall. However, the rise of Chinese invest-

ment in the Black Sea region, the new Russian strategy relying on *de facto* states to slow down the integration process of EaP countries into the EU and NATO, and the increasing number of businesses and tourists in unrecognized territories must be taken into consideration.

This is not about recognition, or not anymore, but about avoiding the next crisis like the Malaysian Airline Flight 17 in the Donbas. We should also think about the people living in the areas, and most of all about the consequences on US/EU's soft power if we are not trying to innovate when it comes to diplomacy. We can leave countries like Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia on the waiting list for EU integration, but, like Turkey, they may get disappointed on the long run and look for another great power to support them. All elements included in this article can be used by experts working on such issues, but the idea of a centre dedicated to *de facto* states, located in the Black Sea region and including people coming from *de facto* states, as much as the suggestion regarding visas, are the two most important factors.

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# Predictability in the International and European Areas: Options for the South Caucasus

*Elena Mandalenakis*

## Introduction

The practices that secured the sustainability of peace in Europe for more than sixty years are in disarray today. There are increasing tensions among the hegemonic powers, among regional powers and between neighbours to the degree that peace should not be taken for granted anymore.

Past ideologies catering solely to state interests and not to a peaceful international environment have resurfaced. These interests especially within the European continent and the Middle East relate to resources and energy issues. Individual state economic interests seem to overtly surpass the collective economic interests and thus, to endanger regional organizations established to secure the economic viability of their members and to regulate mutually beneficial trade interactions and practices.

It seems that states are uneasy and impatient to resolve their disputes through diplomacy before they revert to the use of military power. It is evident that the current security regime does not cater to the needs of the US, the EU, Russia, Turkey, Iran, China, North Korea, Israel, etc.

Therefore, we observe a resurgence of Power politics and geopolitics with a) a simultaneous diminishment of the power of international norms that had dominated the theoretical discourse and politics until recently and b) an arms race with the weakening of arms control treaties and regulations. The US is currently pulling out from the Nuclear weapons deal with Iran, while the EU is strongly supporting its implementation. On other fronts, we observe retaliatory diplomatic moves such as the expulsions of more than a hundred Russian diplomats and intelligence agents, by twenty-seven states in response to the Skripal incident in the UK.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the existence or not of predictability in International Relations and if so the means of achieving it. The issue is not the contribution of International Relations theories in the prediction of state behaviour but of realistic endeavours to establish international rules of conduct. Predictability then becomes an essential criterion for a stable international environment if states are to interact in a peaceful manner in the South Caucasus and the wider European area.

### **Predictability**

In the past, and especially during the Cold War, state interactions were guided by opposing ideologies with different priorities and goals, pursued through different practices. The West focused on peace, economic viability and social welfare, goals which would be attained through democratic means and practices and would benefit the state and the majority of its citizens. At the same time, they favoured openness, accountability and transparency. The East on the other hand, was guided by a different historical experience, being governed by totalitarian governments that focused primarily on the strength of the state in both regional and international planes, being significantly more introvert, favouring relations with like-minded states usually in the region and exercising governance with a total lack of transparency and accountability. Overall, the state function was focused on the appearance and perception of the state itself rather than the welfare of its citizens.

### **International Treaties**

Participation in international and regional organizations aims at increasing security, with the states actively participating in the international community and interacting on various levels and issues. Their positions are expressed and their goals become known to all. They need to abide by rules of conduct, they come closer through interaction and cooperation. The creation of international regimes, the adoption, or not, of treaties and global trade provide information on state interests utilized in international diplomacy. Although this practice is not a panacea, it nevertheless increases the regulation of state behaviour and predictability in international relations.

In the current state of affairs, treaties are the predominant tools in order to bridge conflicting state ideologies and minimize unpredictable state behaviour. These may be descriptive but prescriptive as well. Following such an agreed upon way of interaction, a certain behaviour is expected that will allow the creation of certain scenarios prescribing specific pathways of decisions, suitable for specific actions and thus, leading to expected outcomes. Therefore, there is a limited number of responses that an action can create, virtually eliminating the case-by-case decision making as the scenarios create specific responses. Such a scenario however is subject to States' integrity, in the sense that they abide by the rules and procedures they have agreed upon. Non-compliance in whole or in part leads to unpredictability. Despite the increasing goal of increasing predictability, international law, the outcome of intense and lengthy negotiations among states, is not observed and often violated. The problem is that international law is not even respected by the states who vote and support the Treaties and/or Peace agreements as there is no framework of enforcement. A paradox to this state of affairs is the example of states, which although preach in favour of democratic values, freedom, respect for human rights and sustainability, in practice they do not sign the Treaties, so they can avoid their binding effect and expand their strategic foreign policy options.

To ensure uniform implementation by all the actors involved, a constant stream of interaction by way of communication and negotiation is required on a state level. To achieve this, the International or regional institutions become the venues within which states interact with each other. An example of such a successful initiative in the field would be in the form of the Helsinki Accords or the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, where states could cooperate by reiterating the respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty and the inviolability of borders as they did during the Cold War. The recipe for this success was enshrined in the non-binding nature and the non-treaty oriented language which allowed the participating states to choose whether they would comply or not voluntarily. Despite the timeline of the initiative being in the midst of the Cold War, thirty-five states signed them, amongst which, states of the Warsaw Pact (East Germany, Bulgaria, Poland) although not by the Soviet Union.

The document was seen both as a significant step toward reducing Cold War tensions and as a major diplomatic boost for the Soviet Union at the time, due to its clauses on the inviolability of national frontiers and respect for territorial integrity,



which were seen to consolidate the USSR's territorial gains in Eastern Europe following the Second World War. Considering objections from Canada, Spain, Ireland and other states, the Final Act simply stated that "frontiers" in Europe should be stable but could change by peaceful internal means.<sup>1</sup>

The Helsinki Final Act became the backbone of OSCE activities. The civil rights portion became part of the (NGO) Moscow Helsinki Group that was monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords and evolved to be the International Helsinki Federation and Human Rights Watch.

## **International Organisations**

State membership in international or regional institutions as well as compliance with internationally accepted norms and international law are ways to observe, regulate and constrain state behaviour thus fulfilling the objective of increasing predictability in the international system. Membership in international or regional organizations however does not guarantee the avoidance of disputes or the resolution of past conflicts such as the Israel and Palestine conflict, as well as the Cyprus-Greece-Turkey conflict in 1974. Furthermore, they cannot guarantee peace as the states do not abide to the established rules of conduct and which instead are used to justify their foreign policy after they have implemented it. In the 2018 Syria air strikes, the justification used was the existence and use of chemical weapons even though the verification of the justification could only take place after the "surgical" air strikes of the research, storage and production facilities of the chemicals.

### *How Can International Relations Become More Predictable?*

It could be argued that returning to the practices of the Cold War, would increase regional or global stability. This would mean the validation of the spheres of influence and the stability they provide in the international system, for example bipolarity. This way, the multiplicity of actors will be eliminated and it will become more manageable to predict and prescribe state behaviour. The same outcome could be achieved by allowing the hijacking of international institutions, so that powerful or large states can

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<sup>1</sup> Hiden, John, et.al.: The Baltic question during the Cold War. Routledge 2008. p. 209.

dominate all the processes in order to fulfil their vital security interests. Then stability and predictability will be at their highest. This however cannot be the preferred solution as it will invariably lead to undemocratic practices and hegemonic policies that favour only the strongest of states.

Another possible avenue would be the creation of new institutions better suited for the existing political and security concerns. The question however remains on whether we should repeal entirely the existing cannon of international law or agree to its expansion to new legal practices that would codify the present security interests and making it tougher for all and not just for the weak or small states to disregard their legally prescribed obligations. The problem however, runs deeper and it is not only about international law and institutions.

The lack of communication at times relates to self-perceptions of power, such as perceptions of superiority by some states (US, Russia) or group of states (EU), that are rooted in history and predetermine the expected state behaviour. At the same time, “perceptions of the other” that relate to perceptions of threat and to perceptions regarding the identity of the enemy determine foreign policy. For example, Russia perceives itself as equal to the Western states and a hard power with Putin expressing respect for strong opponents and being unforgiving to “traitors.” Trump on the other hand treats Putin as a potential strong business partner and wants to appear as equally unforgiving to “traitors.” In general, business means business in Russia and it does not necessarily relate to politics while in the West politics and business are intertwined. These perceptions are interconnected to their foreign policy choices.

Perceptions are expressed through policy language and it is often observed that there is a lack of common understanding between strong and medium states. There are either hidden messages in the actors’ communication regarding their interests or they are simply sincere about them. So often, Russia and the West interpret differently the same message. This combined with the lack of a coherent policy by the US and the EU towards Russia, as well as the US withdrawal from Europe and the Middle East, creates instability and unpredictability.

Despite the existing insecurity between Western states and Russia, attempts to increase European security have not been successful due to lack of trust

and different perceptions regarding security and definitions of the other. Such an attempt was Dmitry Medvedev's initiative to create a EU-Russia security space. This initiative intended at the design of a more inclusive European Security Treaty that would replace the "NATO-dominated" European security but not NATO itself. Medvedev aimed at a legally binding Treaty that would emphasize the "indivisible, equal, and diminished security" in Europe by decreasing NATO's role.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the 2009 Treaty document did not address significant issues such as arms control, confidence building, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, terrorism and trans-border organized crime.

The document's language was vague as it urged the parties to participate as individual states and to put aside their security allies while at the same time they could maintain their membership in security organizations. It also laid down some rules that would serve as conflict prevention measures among the members. The members had to declare their respect for the security concerns of other states and they had to refrain from supporting any actions that would infringe the security of others. The document laid out basic principles and state interaction was not regulated in detail. This combined with the parties' lack of trust regarding Russian security interests in Europe, increased insecurity. Consequently, the Medvedev European Security Treaty (2008) failed because it was perceived by European states as a Russian attempt to weaken NATO and thus, Europe's capacity to defend itself.

### **The EU's Way to Increase Predictability: Conditionality for Future EU Members**

State membership in international or regional institutions as well as compliance with internationally accepted norms and international law are ways to observe, regulate and constrain state behaviour thus fulfilling the objective of increasing predictability in the international system.

The EU model of integration aims at increasing predictability, stability and security through state interaction at various levels and across multiple is-

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<sup>2</sup> Weitz, Richard: The Rise and Fall of Medvedev's European Security Treaty. On Wider Europe, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, May 2012, p. 2.

sues. The main tool the EU successfully employs to increase its political and economic security is conditionality. Conditionality is not a new instrument and the EU uses for the accession of new states to impose the adoption and respect for the *acquis communautaire* and the EU procedures. Due to the nature of the EU, it also utilises conditionality as a foreign policy tool to guarantee the binding cooperation in trade negotiations and to impose the adoption of clear and binding rules of conduct, through the adoption of its core values and community achievements. Furthermore, through conditionality, the EU requires prospective members to have territorial integrity and stable internationally recognised borders.

The success of conditionality depends on:

- a) In general, the credibility of the EU in case of non-compliance, meaning that the EU should not offer rewards, if the prerequisite conditions are not met, for example Turkey's non-compliance to the European Convention of Human Rights has stalled the accession negotiations.

Credible accession process grounded in strict and fair conditionality is vital to enhance the resilience of countries in the Western Balkans and of Turkey. Under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) or Eastern Partnership, many people wish to build closer relations with the Union: our enduring power of attraction can spur transformation in these countries.<sup>3</sup>

- b) The EU must have more power or a strategic advantage over the other negotiating partner (economic, military, energy, etc.) so that the reward of fulfilling the conditions is higher than the cost of doing so.
- c) There must be a perception of gain, not possible to attain with other means. This supports that the hardship of abiding to the conditions imposed, is worth compared to the reward and thus, it becomes an achievement.

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<sup>3</sup> Shared Vision, Common Action: A stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy, June 2016, p. 9. <[http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf)>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

- d) Geographical proximity along with historical experience with allies/enemies would increase the difficulty in attaining the requested conditions. For example, it will be harder for a South Caucasus state to abide to EU conditions bearing in mind its proximity with Russia and its perceived objections to the decrease of its influence in the region. The same would apply to any state that has a trouble history with its neighbours such as Poland and the Baltic States with Russia. Of course, this could equally be an example for strong determination to separate from a troubled past, with Ukraine being the most recent example of such determination.
  
- e) In these cases, and as conditionality assumes that one party relies on the other, it is important that any agreements are accompanied by security guarantees thus, the EU must be able to guarantee the security of the South Caucasus if these states are to move away from their former and traditional ally, Russia.

### **The EU's Way to Increase Predictability: Conditionality for Non-EU Members**

The EU, bordering Russia, a key state for European security, part of it having experienced the Cold War politics, is interested in securing its borders by strengthening its neighbouring states. Military might not guarantee for the long term the stability and security of the borders, especially if the state is supranational. Utilizing its strength as a soft power, the EU follows a different path towards security, by aiming to instil in neighbouring states its core values of democracy, justice and rule of law, respect for human rights, respect of territorial integrity and development. The EU feels that strong democratic states are considered more stable, less likely to be ruled or being influenced by other states, and less likely to become autocratic, introverted and hostile to their neighbours.

Experts have been analysing Russia's relations with the EU and NATO and many of them express their fears that we are entering in a period of new

Cold War.<sup>4</sup> According to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres Russia-US relations have been deteriorating to the extent that they are approaching a Cold War situation. He does not however claim that we are back in Cold War times, as in the current situation there are multiple actors “that are relatively independent and with an important role in many of the conflicts that we are witnessing, with risks of escalation that are well known.” Moreover,

during the Cold War there were mechanisms of communication and control to avoid the escalation of incidents, to make sure that things would not get out of control when tensions would rise. Those mechanisms have been dismantled,

according to Guterres.<sup>5</sup>

Following the success the EU enjoyed with weaker future member states, it also attempted to use such conditionality principles towards countries that do not aspire to become EU members. However, problems were encountered specifically with imposing conditions on Russia. A good example of this is the failure of the Meseberg Memorandum (2010).

### **Meseberg Memorandum**

The Meseberg Memorandum was an attempt by Germany to involve Russia in conflict management and conflict resolution, as an equal partner during its pursuit for deeper bilateral relations with Russia, in sight of the decreased US presence in Europe during the Obama administration. Germany supported that the conflict between the secessionist area of Transnistria and Moldova was a good testing bed for strengthening the European security. The Memorandum laid down the main points of the bilateral security

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<sup>4</sup> Rumer, Eugene. Russia and the West in a New Standoff. In: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 14.06.2017. <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/06/14/russia-and-west-in-new-standoff-pub-71250>>, accessed on 02.10.2018. Also: Interview with S. Aleksashenko, P. Baev, M. O’Hanlon, S. Pifer, A. Polyakova, A. Stent, S. Talbott and T. Wright. In: Restoring Equilibrium: U.S. Policy Options for Countering and Engaging Russia. In: Foreign Policy at Brookings, January 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Nichols, Michelle. U.N. Chief Warns Another Cold War Developing Between Russia, U.S. In: Reuters, 29.03.2018. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-un/un-chief-warns-another-cold-war-developing-between-russia-u-s-idUSKBN1H52QQ>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

dialogue between Germany and Russia regarding the resolution of the Transnistria conflict. The Chancellor Merkel's initiative was co-signed by the Russian President Medvedev during their meeting at Meseberg Castle near Berlin on June 4-5, 2010.

The Memorandum laid out the establishment of an EU-Russia Political and Security Committee (ER PSC) on the ministerial level between the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov that would serve as a forum for an enhanced dialogue regarding international political and security issues, conflict resolution through multi-lateral processes and thus, it would be charged with the establishment of "ground rules for joint EU-Russia civil/military crisis management operations."<sup>6</sup> This would open the prospects for a more intense Russian-EU security dialogue over the Transnistria conflict.

Nevertheless, there were conditions attached to this cooperation.

In Berlin's view, Russia should ultimately withdraw its troops from Moldova's territory and allow Moldova to reunify with Transnistria (subject to myriad details on political, constitutional, and military issues). In return for cooperating to settle this conflict, Russia could receive a major role in European security affairs, with access to EU decision-making processes via the proposed committee.<sup>7</sup>

Russia would withdraw its troops in good faith and in return, it would be "rewarded" with its participation in the EU-Russia PSC. Hence, the role of the committee would not be the tool facilitating the fulfilment of common security interests but Russia's reward for ending the conflict thus, limiting the need for compromises in the future. At first glance, this deal seems to disfavour Russia, but in reality the committee would allow for a unidirectional access to EU's decision-making process while the EU would not have this potential regarding Russia's decision-making. According to Vladimir Socor as the ER PSC would, apparently, have more powers than

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<sup>6</sup> Memorandum. Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Dmitry Medvedev meeting on 4-5 June 2010, in Meseberg.

<sup>7</sup> Socor, Vladimir: Meseberg Process: Germany Testing EU-Russia Security Cooperation Potential. *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 7, Issue 191/2010. <<https://jamestown.org/program/meseberg-process-germany-testing-eu-russia-security-cooperation-potential/>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

the NATO-Russia Council, Russia could possibly further attempt to gain access in NATO decision-making.<sup>8</sup>

### **EU Reactions to the Meseberg Memorandum**

The EU governments did not receive the German initiative in a positive way as neither the EU Council nor the Commission had been consulted prior to its announcement especially since it was followed by the EU-Russia Summit. The High Representative supported that the ER PS Committee would not enhance the EU-Russia dialogue further as it is specific to the Transnistria conflict. Senior EU officials further explained that such a committee would not add value to the already EU-Russia diplomatic agenda that involves multiple meetings over the year. As a result to the EU reaction, the issue was not discussed in the EU-Russia Summit in December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and the Council did not make any formal decisions on the matter.

### **Reading behind the Memorandum**

This initiative showed Germany's intention to take a leading role in establishing closer relations with Russia without prior receiving an EU endorsement or consult the US as official participants in the 5+2 format international negotiations for the Transnistria conflict resolution. By disregarding the EU, Germany sought to play a leading role in the formation of European security policy,<sup>9</sup> while by disregarding the US position on the matter, it showed its intention to act unilaterally from its NATO allies. It further became evident that Germany had altered its position on the Transnistria conflict. It refrained from criticizing the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria and supported the formation of a Moldova-Transnistria federal

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, circulated a Confidential Non-Paper to the Interested Parties of the Conflict called: Key Issues for a Solution of a Transnistria Conflict. German Diplomacy Tilts toward Russia on Transnistria Negotiations. 06.06.2011. <<http://www.moldova.org/en/german-diplomacy-tilts-toward-russia-on-transnistria-negotiations-221612-eng>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.



state. Hence, Germany adopted a position that was closer to Russia by thus disregarding the position of the EU.<sup>10</sup>

According to Makarychev, Russia's cooperation in the Memorandum was viewed as Russia's acceptance of the principle of conditionality, for the first time, that it verbally rejects.<sup>11</sup> Of course, the gain from this agreement would have been far greater for Russia and detrimental to the EU, if it had been implemented.

## **Problems with EU Defence**

A strong EU defence policy is by definition difficult to attain in Europe. The composition of the EU, consisting of 28 member-states with different history and culture, geopolitical significance, and military posture, make it difficult to find a common defence interest. The mere fact that many of the member-states are positioned at the EU external border makes them more sensitive to issues of border security, compared to the states that occupy the geographical core of the EU. The political, economic and military capacity of some EU states would also differentiate their views over security. Hence, the role of France and Germany as political and economic leaders of the EU respectively, accentuates their willingness for a strong European security and defence policy.

The geopolitical position of the states does influence their perceptions of threat and of the identity of the "enemy." Hence, the post-Soviet states now members of the EU feel more threatened by modern Russia as a derivative of the Soviet Union. These states when feeling threatened, revert to scorched earth policy solutions which would ordinarily be considered as last resort policies of their western EU counterparts. So, for example, when Hungary felt threatened by uncontrolled and illegal migration inflows, it opted for the building of a wall to prevent the influx of the people into the

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<sup>10</sup> A Test Run for Eurasia. German-Foreign-Policy.com 05.09.2011. <<https://www.german-foreign-policy.com/en/news/detail/5337>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

<sup>11</sup> Makarychev, Andrey: Russia and the EU in a Multipolar World: Discourses, Identities, Norms. ibidem-Verlag/ibidem Press 2014, p. 160.

country, thus, violating the fundamental freedom of open borders and free movement within a united Europe. Ordinarily the nature of the EU decision-making process plus the absence of a common European Defence Policy, creates difficulties with respect to the need for immediate military reaction and responsiveness.

## **EU Global Strategy**

The EU adopted its Global Strategy in June 2016, designed around five priorities. The strategy focuses on the concept of (a) Resilience, identified as “capacity to resist and regenerate” for the states and societies in the East and South, (b) aims at being crisis-proof by developing integrated approach to conflicts and crisis, (c) opts to stabilize its neighbouring states by the strengthening of its security and defence, (d) by promoting and supporting cooperative regional orders and (e) reinforcing global governance based on international law. The strategy however is gradually formulated and as such is not specific enough on the means to accomplish these five priorities.<sup>12</sup>

Reforms in Common Foreign and Security Policy laid the foundation of the idea for a multi-speed Europe, to counter its past ineffectiveness and to reduce its vulnerability. These reforms must go hand in hand with reforms in the fundamental decision-making processes of the EU, as they are tightly intertwined.

Internally, the EU will try to deal with its legitimacy problem by gradually replacing its unanimous decision-making with a qualified majority voting rule. This reform will contribute to a more resilient foreign policy and will make it more responsive to hybrid security challenges. The European Parliament also favours the formation of a state coalition willing to engage further and play a central role in the EU, even though this translates into the taking of action by certain Member States and disregarding the objec-

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<sup>12</sup> EU Foreign Minister Adopted Common Conclusions on Implementing the EU Global Strategy. Foreign Affairs Council, 17.10.2016. <<https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/eu-foreign-ministers-adopted-common-conclusions-implementing-eu-global-strategy>>, accessed on 02.10.2018; also: The EU Global Strategy – Year 1. European Commission., <<https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/vision-action>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

tions of others while doing so. Even if this is the case, considering the organization of the EU, it will not be easy to utilize its members' capacity (civilian, military assets) as it will only be made accessible when the situation arises and not before.

Similarly, its cooperation with NATO in the EU-NATO Declaration at the Warsaw Summit of 2016, will run in parallel and NATO will not become the military leg of the EU. This translates into the assumption of responsibility for European Security by the EU itself, with the synchronization of EU-NATO procedures limited on crisis response alone and in general.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, the wording of the Strategy does not prescribe the conditions under which any such cooperation will be effected and lacks the existence of a mechanism that prohibits member states from utilizing EU resources for their individual foreign policy.

With regards to the possibility of its success, the deepening of the foreign and defence policy attempts to provide the framework for more predictability in today's international environment. However, it is too general and vague in its principles, the tools it utilizes are too global and cannot be applicable in specific regions or certain conflicts. Therefore, we will have to see if the Global strategy will influence the Eastern European Partnership and how successful will be in the stabilization of the South Caucasus region.

## **Practices to Increase Cooperation**

There is no need to reinvent the wheel but to revert to the values and practices that led to peace. There is a multiplicity of institutions and abundant

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<sup>13</sup> Speech by High representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Future of EU-NATO Cooperation Conference. European Commission, 21.11.2016. <<https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-future-eu-nato-cooperation-conference>>, accessed on 02.10.2018. Also: Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of The North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 08.07.2016. <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21481/nato-eu-declaration-8-july-en-final.pdf>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

international law, capable of containing state antagonism and hostility before it escalates and initiatives attempting to resolve persisting conflicts. Eliminate the impact of illegitimate and non-accountable actors.

Focus on the institutions that integrate all adversary states (i.e. US, Russia,), select the ones that do not distinguish among their members (OSCE) and expand their mandate. At the same time, revisit the ones that split them into camps, as was done in the cases of the Warsaw Pact and NATO and revise and merge their function through cooperation in areas of low politics and create overlapping circles. Update them to respond to new security concerns as states reshape their security policy to fight hybrid wars, cyber terrorism, migration, etc. thus, increase their flexibility to adapt to new challenges. NATO has already been doing it and the EU is in the same process with its Global Strategy.

Balance out the need for fragmentation in reaction to integration, as this is observed in many European countries and within the EU. Economic regimes, trade and financial transactions across continents and systems increase the states' economic interdependence to the degree that it is difficult to speak of state economies. Participation in international fora and organizations increases interdependence also in political terms. Treat all states as equal partners in economic and security deals and weigh what each state can contribute to facilitate cooperation as the partners focus primarily on the positive aspects of their interaction and mitigate the negative ones. Another way would be to enhance economic cooperation of already existing institutions through the establishment of wider economic and free trade zones (i.e. between the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union) and enhance trusting dialogue. Utilise EU soft power that promotes economic and security policies with an emphasis on democratic values, ethics, respect of human rights over territorial interests and integrity.

Revisionist policies towards neighbours and expansionist policies only heighten the level of real or perceived threat and do not foster cooperation. Diplomats should be the ones to negotiate and the military authorities have to be cautious, as they have better knowledge of the operations in the field. Make use of cultural diplomacy to change perceptions of the other, although its contribution maybe limited in the fields of security and especially defence.

## **Proposals for Cooperation in the Wider European Region and the South Caucasus**

Taking into account the competing interests of the different actors and their varied capacity both in military and economic terms in the South Caucasus, the following points should be considered:

- 1) States should abstain from justifying pre-determined perceptions other states may have.
- 2) States could cooperate by reiterating the respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty and the inviolability of borders as they did during the Cold War. This could be achieved in the form of the Helsinki Final Act (1975) which although not binding, was signed by 35 states from East and West at the time.
- 3) Avoid cooperation based on conditionality with Russia due to its self-perception and favour the promotion of business deals where the profit outweighs the already discussed obstacles. The energy sector is a great avenue for such cooperation and has the capacity to influence the military interests of states.
- 4) Taking into account the geopolitics and geographical position, their security and their history that dictates their interactions with their neighbours and thus understand the position of the South Caucasus states. They can become the brokers for the emergence of a wider trade area, taking into advantage their geographical position between East and West, as transit states for energy, and their overlapping membership in organizations and initiatives such as the Eurasian Economic Union, the European Eastern Partnership and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
- 5) Rethink the EU enlargement and its consequences to security. It could strengthen the position of the South Caucasus states but unfortunately Russia and the EU may not yet be ready to share a border in that region.

- 6) The states should not have to choose sides between the West and Russia, they must curve their own path that allows for the normalization of their relations with both sides. They must incorporate Western values and processes in their political interaction with Russia, without however, Russia getting the message that it is bypassed or that it is losing its grip on the region. Unfortunately Russia cannot become an honest mediator as it takes sides in the protracted post-Soviet conflicts. In the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh it supports Azerbaijan while in the Transnistria conflict it takes the side of Moldova. It is actually specified by Stefan Meister, that Russia is not really interested in solving the conflicts as it maintains its influence on the involved parties and the region as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Makarychev, Andrey: *Russia and the EU in a Multipolar World: Discourses, Identities, Norms.* ibidem-Verlag/ibidem Press 2014, p. 160, ft. 408.



# **The New World Dis-Order. A Long Way Back from the End of History**

*Alexander Dubony*<sup>1</sup>

This article represents a brief analysis of the current situation of the global order and the prospects of multipolarity.

## **From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to the Fall of Lehman Brothers**

In order to understand the present and the future global situation the analysis should start in the last phase of the bipolar system, in the late Gorbachev era. This time was marked by the hope to build a new, inclusive, cooperative world order between the USSR and the Western countries after the mutual end of the Cold War. This “new world order”, a new system of international relations, was meant to be the result of the convergence of formerly hostile systems through the establishment of new joint institutions of international relations. The basic principles of this system were outlined, inter alia, in the “Paris Charter” and implemented during the voting in the United Nations Security Council enabling “Operation Desert Storm.”

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, however, the idea of a “new world order” was claimed by George Bush Senior. The idea of convergence lost its importance. The amicable end of the Cold War was interpreted as the sole merit and triumph of the West. The fall of the Iron Curtain and the break-up of the Soviet Union were celebrated as the “final” victory of the liberal world order. In the words of Francis Fukuyama, the end of the Cold War has brought us to the “the end of history.” Ivan Krastev from the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia is absolutely right, when he states that since the mid-1990s especially the European project was intellectually deep-

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Alexander Dubowy, Senior Researcher at the Scientific Cluster for Polemology and Legal Ethics at the University of Vienna and the Austrian National Defence Academy and Scientific Director of the Institute for Security Policy (ISP).



ly rooted in Fukuyama's idea of the end of history and the idea of the liberal world order.<sup>2</sup>

This "new liberal world order" has determined international relations over the past 25 years. This order, however, turned out to be a *de facto* unipolar world order under the global leadership of the only remaining world power, the USA. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the *de facto* victorious powers of the Cold War, primarily the USA, did not attempt to build new structures. They rather turned the already existing institutions from the bipolar period (first and foremost the NATO, European Community, Council of Europe) into the main pillars of a new European and ultimately Western-dominated global order.

According to John Mearsheimer this order can be interpreted as an attempt to establish a quasi-global governance, based on three main liberal theories of international relations. These three theories are, as stated by John Mearsheimer in his *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*;

- 1) prosperous and economically interdependent states are unlikely to fight each other,
- 2) democracies do not fight each other, and
- 3) international institutions enable states to avoid war and to concentrate instead on building cooperative relationships.<sup>3</sup>

These theories were more or less openly declared by the US-officials since the Clinton administration. Today, these theories together with Fukuyama's influential idea of the End of History have been proven wrong and as famous American academic Walter Russell Mead expressed well during a discussion at the Bruno Kreisky Forum in March 2017 in Vienna; "history is back and it is hungry."

Today, we are facing instability, systemic crisis and stepwise dissolution of the international order which emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Un-

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<sup>2</sup> Ivan Krastev, *After Europe*, Penn University Press, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Norton & Company, 2014 [The virtues and limits of theory].

ion. To put it pointedly, the last 25 years turned out to be a mere transition period between the epoch of bipolarity and the dawning era of new global disorder.

The world has reached the end of the unipolar phase and is standing at the cusp of a new “Era of Global Disorder”; call it as you wish “Interregnum”, “The nameless epoch”, “Global Thirty Years’ War” or to quote Russian academic Sergey Rogov “Multipolar Chaos.”

### **Multipolarity and the “New Regional Powers”**

This “Era of Global Disorder” is characterized by confrontational multipolarity, growing regional competition, flexible regional cooperation and growing importance of non-state actors. Especially some of the Islamist terrorist groups and transnational companies are step-by-step turning into fully fledged actors of international relations.

The relative weakness and relative decline of the US goes with the rise of powerful regional actors. Let us call this phenomenon – “New Regional Powers”: first and foremost, China, but also inter alia Russia, Iran, Turkey, India, Japan, Germany, Poland. What is new about these “New Regional Powers”? They have only limited claim to global power but almost unlimited aspirations to regional power in the areas of their privileged interests. To put it pointedly, the world order is not moving towards a new bipolarity. There is no intense competition between rival or even antagonistic political, economic and cultural-ideological systems, as it was the case during the Cold War and the “old bipolarity.”

For now, no actor wants to take the global lead from the USA, no one wants the whole responsibility. But the problem is: the USA do not want the global lead and the global responsibility either. What is even worse, the USA cannot be trusted anymore.<sup>4</sup> The USA is no longer a *status quo* power in international relations as it has been for decades, today the US is becom-

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen M. Walt, America Can’t Be Trusted Anymore (10.04.2018). <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/10/america-cant-be-trusted-anymore/>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

ing more and more a revisionist power, ready to do what is necessary to keep its global influence from declining.

But what does the rise of the “New Regional Powers” and the relative decline of the USA mean for the international security? The growing regional competition does not exclude cooperation in certain areas and the mutual fight against common threats, especially taking into account the high interdependence of our globalized world. However, since a clear delimitation of regional spheres of influence is hardly possible, an increase in readiness for confrontation must be assumed. Even more: In the new “Era of Global Disorder” spheres of influence and demilitarized zones will become once again legitimate objects of diplomatic negotiation, in order to reduce tensions among “New Regional Powers.” These developments are to be seen not in the old-fashioned Cold-War style but as a kind of gentle parallel to Samuel Huntington’s ideas or even Vadim Tsybursky’s concept of civilizational realism. But what to do with smaller states? Just to quote Michael Lind from New America Foundation:

...in the new global *modus vivendi* small and weak nations might chafe at the constraints on their independence such agreements impose, but their discomfort is unavoidable in a world that, regardless of models of domestic government, will always be organized largely by states on the basis of hierarchies of military and industrial power.<sup>5</sup>

Against this background the almost forgotten concept of permanent neutrality (re-interpreted as engaged or functional neutrality) might play an important role once again, especially for the states of the so called “Europe-in-between”, first and foremost in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans.

Steadfast alliances, such as the NATO (the unfirming of NATO can already be observed using the example of Turkey), will lose a great deal of their importance and give way to flexible, regional partnerships, which to some extent might imitate the model of the Chinese-Russian relations. Dmitri Trenin from the Moscow Carnegie Center once called this relations

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Lind, America vs. Russia and China: Welcome to Cold War II (15.04.2018). <<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-vs-russia-china-welcome-cold-war-ii-25382?page=7>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

model, the “Entente-Model”, which follows the principle not always with each other but never openly against each other.

The talks on arms control are based on the notion of security symmetry, equal threat potential and a comparable number of weapons systems. In times of ubiquitous hybridity and the massive changes in the security environment, the possibility of symmetrical responses to security threats is becoming less important and asymmetry is becoming more important. However, the asymmetric threat potential cannot be mathematically measured and balanced against each other. In addition, the cyber dimension creates a completely new level of security policy whose potential cannot yet be conclusively assessed. With the cyber dimension a whole new area of possible confrontation appears. For this reason, the international security negotiations should focus much more on the control and containment of the cyber dimension.

And all these events take place against the backdrop of a global shift of power politics from the West towards Asia. This global power shift can be summarized under the catchphrase: “The Pacific Ocean as the Mediterranean Sea of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

### **The Role of the UN**

Today, the world is facing enormous mutual challenges and threats; inter alia proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Islamist terrorism, religious and ethnic disputes, struggles for natural resources, migration waves. The fight against common threats cannot be tackled sustainably without a comprehensive reform of the UN, which is in a deep crisis.

Sergey Karaganov from the Russian think tank Council on Foreign and Defense Policy defines the main reasons for this crisis of the UNO is the changed international situation after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and the emergence of new states. According to Karaganov, many of these newly independent states have never existed in their history within these borders and the struggle for their statehood and nation building contribute more to global instability than to stability.

The reorganization of the UN must begin with the Security Council, whose mandate from 1945 is no longer feasible. But is such a reform even thinkable? The UN is, by its very nature, the result of very concrete historical events, the reflection of a particular historical era, a particular concept of a world order conceived by the world's leading great powers at a given time. The UN has *de facto* never been an independent structure superior to states. It is neither a world government nor a world legislator. The central position in the United Nations is held neither by the Secretary General nor the General Assembly, but rather by the Security Council, more precisely the five permanent members of the Security Council, who enjoy the right of veto. But the present five permanent members of the UN Security Council could neither draft a new vision of a world order binding for all others, nor solve emerging conflicts all over the world on their own, even if they want to do so, which they obviously do not.

The problem with all proposals to reform the UN Security Council is their absolute unfeasibility. But still, what were recently the three most popular ideas for the reform of the Security Council:

1. Dissolution of the Security Council. One bold proposal was to eliminate all permanent membership and to create a council of elected representatives from different regional areas;
2. Abolishment of the Veto right. The use of the veto right after the Cold War has dropped off dramatically but the mere threat to use the veto has been shown to strongly affect the final outcome of Security Council debates. So, the reform proposal suggests abolishing the veto right;
3. Expansion of Security Council. The most well-known proposal is to increase the number of permanent members (adding such countries like Germany, Japan, and the missing BRICS-states: South Africa, India and Brazil) and to change the voting rules so that a veto requires at least two or three permanent members and not only one. According to this proposal the number of elected members to the Security Council should be also expanded, this would increase global representation and thereby bolster the credibility of the Security Council.

All the attempts to reform the UN failed in the recent years. There is just very little hope the UN could probably reform itself from within. So, it would be better to “think out of the box.” The reform of the Security Council deeply needs an external impetus. The idea of creating a multilateral organization based on the industrialized countries of G-7 (including the BRICS-countries) to face the new threats to international security was interesting 10 to 15 years ago, but nowadays it is hardly feasible anymore. But the institutionalization of another multilateral format, such as the G-20, and endowing it with executive powers could be an external impetus the UN need and may lead to further UN reforms. We are facing a vicious circle; on the one hand there is no serious danger to the continued existence of the UN, but on the other hand without a comprehensive reform the danger of drifting into the utter insignificance as once the League of Nations cannot be completely ruled out.

Nevertheless, the problem remains just the same. Any reform proposals that are not supported by the veto-bearing countries are doomed to fail. But the veto-bearing countries will hardly share their power. The interests of those “New Regional Powers”, which are not permanent members of the UN Security Council, should also be taken into account.

On this background, today the main task of the UN and especially of the Security Council should be providing a forum for dialogue and first and foremost to prevent the outbreak of a global conflict.

## **Conclusion**

Today more than 25 years after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar world order the vision of the world established after the end of the Second World War and during the Cold War and the Post-Cold War period (one might call it Yalta-Potsdam-Helsinki-Malta-Paris World Order) belongs to the past.

The events since 2013 have shown one thing very clearly. The peace and prosperity in the EU in the past 25 years were not the normal state of things but more of an anomaly of international relations. This anomaly has now given way to the relentless reality. The world is no longer a Western-dominated one and is becoming even less stable than it looks. We are not

just moving towards the end of *de facto* unipolarity, confrontative multipolarity and a new world dis-order, we are already there.

Against this background: A “New European Security Deal” is not to be expected any time soon, because of global and regional reasons. The “New European Security Deal” would require a new balance of power and a fundamental agreement between the permanent members of the UN Security Council on the pillars of a new world order. To make things worse, the interests of those “New Regional Powers”, which are not permanent members of the UN Security Council, should also be taken into account. By no means can we expect such an agreement in the short or medium term due to political ambitions and divergent interests and ideas about the future of the world order. If history has taught us anything it’s that a chaos phase in the international relations has always been and always will be an indispensable prerequisite for a new world order’s genesis. The current conflicts in broader Europe are just a symptom of a much larger problem. The entire post-Cold War European political, economic, security and cultural-ideological architecture was not an inclusive one and was – more or less – built just on two pillars, two institutions, the EU and the NATO. There will be no substantive progress without touching the basic foundations of the post-Cold-War European architecture.

And the last point: Recently a lot of experts and pundits were talking about the positive dynamics and the chances of multipolarity. From the point of view of the realism multipolar systems are more confrontational and war-prone than the bipolar and especially the unipolar ones. So, talking about the positive dynamics and the chances of a multipolar system, we should not forget the dangers and challenges of multipolarity.

As for now, all we can seriously expect is a period of a new world dis-order, a confrontational multipolarity and instead of a “Concert of Great powers” all we will get is a “Great Cacophony of New Regional Powers.”

**PART III:  
FROM NEVER-ENDING CONFLICT  
MANAGEMENT TO CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION AND REGIONAL  
INTEGRATION**





# The Trends in the EU-South Caucasus Relations in the Context of a “New European Security Deal”

*Ahmad Alili*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The South Caucasus changes. Once conquered by the Russian empire, it was considered the ‘Russian sphere of influence’ even following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent countries in the region: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

In the 1990s, these countries developed effective relations with the Trans-Atlantic community. Later, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia opted out for their individual path of development of these relations: some moved faster, some moved slower in the process of integration with the Trans-Atlantic community, and of adopting European values.

The 2008 Georgian events and the changing narrative of Russian geopolitics in the region has affected the future of EU/NATO-South Caucasus relations, halting the advancement of the European vision for regional integration in many ways. Russia reassessed the presence of NATO and EU in its Southern borders as a civilizational threat and an Atlantic-isation of the region.<sup>2</sup>

The recent negative developments in West-Russia relations, conflicts in the Middle East, Crimea and Eastern Ukraine led to the emergence of the ‘New European Security Deal’. Russia’s assertive policy in Ukraine and Syria contributed to the revision of Russia’s intents and to the rethinking of foreign policies of Western countries. Currently, there is a necessity to slow-down the negative developments in EU-Russia relations. The Trans-Atlantic community prefers to avoid confrontations with Moscow, which

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Economic and Social Development (CESD).

<sup>2</sup> Tsygankov, A.P. (2007). Finding a Civilisational Idea: “West,” “Eurasia,” and “Euro-East” in Russia’s Foreign Policy. *Geopolitics*, 12(3), pp. 375-399.

can lead to direct military clashes in the Middle East, Eastern Europe or the Caucasus.

Due to the changing geopolitical context between Russia and the West, the South Caucasus countries have to adapt to a changing reality and alter their foreign policies.

As the EU introduces its so-called 'New Security Deal', regional players, such as Russia, Turkey and Iran reactivate their ambitious policies toward the region. Currently, Georgia and Armenia have chosen their alliances and try to diversify their connections with other military and political alliances, such as NATO. Azerbaijan has effectively positioned itself in two regional triangles – (i) Moscow-Baku-Ankara, (ii) Moscow-Baku-Tehran – while building energy security cooperation with the European nations.

As the West freezes its activity in the region and moves away, the South Caucasus countries have no option, but to align themselves with the regional players, namely, Russia, Turkey and Iran. The so-called 'New European Security Deal' also introduces a new framework to regional conflicts.

This paper analyses the historical role of Russia in the region, development of West-Russia relations in the region and the future of these relations.

To this end, the paper will first introduce historical remarks on Russia and the EU's security presence in the South Caucasus. Following the examination of the role of Russia, Turkey, Iran and Israel in the region, the so-called 'New European Security Deal' will be revised and its effect on the region will be disclosed. The paper will also analyse the effect of the new security realities on the regional conflicts. At the end, conclusions will be provided.

### **Historical Remarks on Russia and EU's Security Presence in the South Caucasus**

The Caucasus is considered traditionally as 'part of Russia' by Western societies. Since the Russian-Qajar (Iran) wars, which ended with the 1828 Turkmenchay treaty, Russian domination in the Greater Caucasus has not been challenged. In between 1917-1920, the Ottomans gained temporary

upper-hand in the region, but the newly established Bolshevik government in Russia was able to restore the boundaries of the previous Russian Empire and take control over Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. For the next 70 years, under Soviet rule, Moscow again was in charge of the region.

By the collapse of the Soviet Union, a historical opportunity emerged for the South Caucasus nations to become 'non-Russian' and build closer ties with European countries and the United States of America. The emergence of the newly established countries in the region also challenged Russia's regional role and created threats for Russian interests in the region. Several academic authors from Russia summarised Russia's national interest toward the Caucasus in the following points:<sup>3 4 5 6</sup>

- The interests within the North Caucasus (Russian part of the Caucasus) are (a) settling internal conflicts (including inter-familial conflicts), (b) preserving territorial integrity of Russia and building effective political and economic management system in the region. For this purpose, Russia must face threats outside its borders, and assure its national interests toward the remaining parts of region.
- The Russian interests in the region against the other countries (a) building effective economic and military-political cooperation with the regional countries, (b) establishing dominant geo-political influence, (c) effectively protecting Russia's national interests in the region and maintaining sufficient military presence in the region to protect its interests.

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<sup>3</sup> Агабалаев, М. И. (2009). Национальные интересы и угрозы общественной безопасности Российской Федерации. Бизнес в законе. Экономико-юридический журнал, Vol 1, pp. 54-58.

<sup>4</sup> Патрушев, Н. П. (2007). Особенности современных вызовов и угроз национальной безопасности России. Журнал российского права, Vol 7 (127), pp. 3-12.

<sup>5</sup> Петрова С. В. Национальные Интересы России на Кавказе. Вестник СГУТиКД, 2011. Vol 1 (15) pp. 120-124.

<sup>6</sup> Герасимович Л.И. (2017). Вызовы и угрозы национальной безопасности. Вестник экономической безопасности, (2), pp. 174-176.

- In Russian media and official narrative, Russia also feels threatened at the ‘civilizational level’: It feels the need to (a) create obstacles for the ‘Atlantic-ization’ of the region and (b) eliminating all the possibilities of NATO’s military presence in the region.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the retreat of Russia from the South Caucasus created an unparalleled historical opportunity for the EU countries and the United States to establish their presence in the region. Historically, the region was influenced (and controlled) by Iran, Turkey and Russia, but none of the EU countries and the US had historical political and economic ties with the region.

There are several reasons, which make the South Caucasus interesting for Western countries, but their main interest is the energy resources of the Caspian Sea. Practically, all countries of the Caspian Sea have oil and gas reserves. The optimal transportation way of these resources to the European market also passes through the South Caucasus (through Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Black Sea).

Additionally, the transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea to the world market has undermined Russian monopoly over oil and gas land-rout transportation to the European market. Hence the presence of EU and USA in the region was seen as a threat to Russian national interests at the global level.

The EU itself has had a very limited security footprint in the region. The EU tried to invest more into soft-power in the region. Analysing the EU’s role in the EaP region, Dov Lynch, Senior Researcher at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EU-ISS) points out:

“The South Caucasus, however, is already crowded by the presence of the UN, the OSCE, and other major powers. This leaves little room to claim, and complicates thinking about a reinforced EU role. In addition, the region’s problems are complex. International organisations and European states have sought for a decade to assuage them. What value added can the EU offer?”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Lynch, D. (2005). The security dimension of the European neighbourhood policy. *The International Spectator*, 40(1), pp. 33-43.

In addition, another key point regarding the EU's Foreign Policy on the South Caucasus was the presence of Turkey in the region as a political and economic power. Turkey is a NATO member and was hopeful for becoming a full-fledged EU member in the 1990s. Thus, the Turkish presence in the region was also considered as EU&US and NATO presence in the region.

Historically, Turkey and Azerbaijan have special relations. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of independent Turkic countries such as Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus and Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, was a 'gift' for Ankara, creating new opportunities in the East. The Caucasus was also the key point in reaching the Central Asian Turkic countries. Therefore, Turkey was pursuing its own interests in the region, alongside 'representing' NATO countries.

On the other hand, The EU was also interested in the active involvement of Turkey to the regional affairs in the Caucasus. Turkish economic and political investment enabled Azerbaijan and Georgia to be part of the oil and gas pipeline system – this enabled European Union to ensure its own energy security.<sup>8</sup>

Turkey has no established relations with Armenia,<sup>9</sup> but following the Rose Revolution in Georgia and structural economic reforms in this country, Georgia became one of the top destinations for Turkish investors.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, following Turkish interest toward the Abkhazia region, Georgia's complaints of the Turkish presence in the region have increased.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Baran, Z. (2007). EU energy security: time to end Russian leverage. *Washington Quarterly*, 30(4), pp. 131-144.

<sup>9</sup> Phillips, D.L. (2012). *Diplomatic History: The Turkey-Armenia Protocols*. Columbia University Academic Commons.

<sup>10</sup> Kirişçi, K. and Kaptanoğlu, N. (2011). The politics of trade and Turkish foreign policy. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 47(5), pp. 705-724.

<sup>11</sup> Kapanadze, S. (2014). Turkish trade with Abkhazia: An apple of discord for Georgia. *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 13(3), pp. 55-68.

Turkey was also a key player in building the new national Army of Azerbaijan. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan detached itself from the Soviet model of Defence Institution Building. Turkish consultants aided in shaping a new Army, which had elements from the Turkish (NATO) army. Turkish professionals also trained a wide range of soldiers and officers.

Starting from the late 1990s Azerbaijan is also actively involved in the defence cooperation and Defence Institution Building with Israel: another country with strong diplomatic ties to the US. This cooperation between a country with Islamic background and the Jewish State lasted longer than expected. Hinting to the hidden part of the relations, the relations between the countries were also labelled as the 'tip of iceberg'.<sup>12</sup>

Armenia-NATO relationship was also a challenge for Russia's presence in the region. Armenia is strongly linked to Russian military, economic and political alliances. Nevertheless, Yerevan always tries to have a positive relation with the EU and to establish links with NATO.

In sum, the regional hegemony of Russia was simultaneously challenged by Turkey and Israel. Turkey (because of its NATO membership) and Israel (because of the close links with USA) in the Russian narrative was seen as Western agents in the region, hence they were considered as civilizational threats.<sup>13</sup> Turkish and Israeli presence in the region would be considered less threatening if both of these countries did not sell weapons to the regional nations and were not involved into the Defence Institution Building.

Yet, Russia did not feel threatened by the Iranian activity in the region, although Tehran also laid out their ambitions toward the region. Iran-West relations since the 1979 revolution in Iran assured Moscow on the neutrality of Iran in its competition with the West. Moscow felt more insecure

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<sup>12</sup> Lindenstrauss, G. (2015). Israel-Azerbaijan: Despite the Constraints, a Special Relationship. *Strategic Assessment*, 17(4), pp. 69-79.

<sup>13</sup> Tsygankov, A.P. (2007). Finding a Civilisational Idea: "West," "Eurasia," and "Euro-East" in Russia's Foreign Policy. *Geopolitics*, 12(3), pp. 375-399.

because of the activity of Western institutions and countries than of the other actors.

With developments in Russia-US, Russia-EU relations, the situation has changed and the need for a New European Security Equilibrium emerged.

### **New European Security Equilibrium: What is it and why now?**

In the current geopolitical context, a US-Russia military clash seems no longer impossible.<sup>14</sup> As the result, the European countries have felt a risky security environment in the region. The assertive policy of Russia regarding Ukraine and Syria has caused policymakers in Brussels and Washington to rethink their foreign policy toward Russia. So far the situation has escalated to the point of alienation.

Russian troops being stationed in Crimea and holding a self-determination referendum in favour of Russia was a blow to the prestige of Western political and military institutions. This led the Trans-Atlantic community to reconsider the pillars of its foreign policy constructed since the end of Cold War. Russia-West relations have become the main source of tension for the common European security system once more.

Unlike the Cold War, the Russian-West confrontation in the current stage has no ideological antagonism, but it also has systematic patterns. The Western countries do not consider the Kremlin leadership as legitimate and democratic. Kremlin, on its turn, has objections regarding the public management in the Western countries: they are portrayed as corrupted and hypocritic. One of the main anti-Western thesis in the narrative of Russian policy-makers was about the NATO and EU enlargements to the East.

The Kremlin's assertive foreign policy also challenges the global dominance of the United States. The NATO-centric security system is not seen as a solid platform to protect Europe anymore. In addition, there is no better platform built yet. This leaves the future of the European Security in trou-

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<sup>14</sup> Trenin, D. (2018). *European Security: From Managing Adversity to a New Equilibrium*. Carnegie Moscow Center.



ble. Hence, the Trans-Atlantic community wants to slow-down (or freeze) the fast and negative developments in its relations with Russia, while finding answers to the existing problems. Thus, the Trans-Atlantic community tries to avoid direct confrontation (intentional or unintentional) with Moscow. The Syrian events, and USA warning Russia in all major attacks in Syria demonstrate how precautionous and risk-avoiding USA is on its relations with the Kremlin.

Alongside, Syria and Ukraine, there are several other hot-points in Russia's immediate neighbourhood, which requires precaution. Policy-makers in Washington DC, Brussels and other EU capital cities are afraid of escalation in South Caucasian and Transnistrian conflicts. Since restoring partnership with Russia is not realistic in the near future, Europe tries to decrease its involvement in the regional affairs in the immediate neighbourhood of Russia (i.e. the South Caucasus). Europe seems to give up on its enlargement plans toward the east of Europe. Ukraine and Georgia's membership to NATO seems to be frozen also. EU was already struggling with building institutions in the new member countries, which once were part of the Socialist Block.

Hereafter, because building ties with Russia takes time, the Trans-Atlantic community has or had to come up with a 'New European Security Deal'. Nevertheless, the adopted changes mainly are preventive measures to avoid further escalation with Russia.

In sum, the European Security Paradigm always evolves. The disbandment of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the independent countries in the South Caucasus created opportunities for close cooperation and for introducing European values to the newly independent countries. The fast changing geopolitical context and the rapid enlargement of the European Union and NATO towards the East created new challenges, which led to the emergence of so-called 'New European Security Equilibrium'.

### **New Realities, Security Challenges and Conflicts in the Region**

The so-called 'New European Security Deal' will increase the role of regional actors in the region. Alongside, Russia-Armenia and West-Georgia alliance, currently, there are two geopolitical triangles in the region:

- Moscow-Baku-Ankara;
- Moscow-Baku-Tehran.

Moscow-Baku-Ankara triangle is mostly about economy. Turkish-Russian relations are characterised by intensified political connections and there is a growing economic interdependence.<sup>15</sup> In many cases, Azerbaijan (and Kazakhstan) plays the role of the ‘mediator’ in the establishment of the vital links between these two countries.<sup>16</sup>

Moscow-Baku-Tehran triangle is focused on regional security issues. Nevertheless, these countries are about to finish construction of a railway connection (Astara-Qazvin-Rasht railway), which will unite Russian and Iranian railroads through Azerbaijan. Hence Indian goods from Mumbai could be delivered to Persian Gulf ports and by railway, they could reach the Baltic ports of Russia.

Consequently, the passive involvement of the European and American actors in the regional process will lead to the domination of regional players and their influence might be multiplied by these security triangles.

In addition, an increased role of the regional actors and balancing them to each other is required by the national interest of the South Caucasus countries; particularly Azerbaijan. Despite of the fears about the repetition of Russia’s use of military power in the region (such as actions in Georgia and Ukraine), Azerbaijan needs Russian involvement in the region to balance Iran’s presence and historical ambitions toward the region. Therefore, Russia will get additional bonus points in providing regional security and might be able to lure Azerbaijan into its regional economic and political alliances.

On the top of that, there are interest groups in Azerbaijan, which are willing to see a strong Russia, or a dominant power in the region, which can be

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<sup>15</sup> Öniş, Z. and Yılmaz, Ş. (2016). Turkey and Russia in a shifting global order: cooperation, conflict and asymmetric interdependence in a turbulent region. *Third World Quarterly*, 37(1), pp. 71-95.

<sup>16</sup> CESD Research Paper, 2016. The response of Turkey and Russia after Jet Crisis and the implications for the South Caucasus.

more resolute in changing the status-quo. With CSTO members Kazakhstan and Belarus acting in a friendlier manner toward Azerbaijan, Baku hopes that the increasing role of Russia and growing economic interdependence between Russia and Turkey will help to achieve desired results in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

As it was concluded by Newnham: “Structurally, Georgia remains in a position of dependency on Moscow”.<sup>17</sup> Russian sanctions over Georgia have economic and political impacts. The decreased presence of the Atlantic community actors in the region also might lead to Russia feeling more secure in the region and easing its approach to Tbilisi. Georgia also might reconsider its approach toward Kremlin.

As the result of the ‘Velvet Revolution’ Armenia has entered a new phase: which will be full of surprise twists in its foreign policy also: Armenia-Russia relations are challenged. In many ways, Armenia’s future foreign policy will largely depend on the extent it would be able to establish positive relations with Turkey.

Nonetheless, as it was stated in the previous paragraph, the European Security Paradigm is an evolving concept and it might be revised. There is a strong need for the Trans-Atlantic community to rethink its position on the South Caucasus: Why the EU and the US need the South Caucasus?

In the early 1990s there were several reasons, which made the South Caucasus interesting for EU and NATO member countries. Most important of them were:

- blocking Russian advancement to the South;
- using the region as the hub for the hydrocarbon richness of the Caspian Sea.

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<sup>17</sup> Newnham, R.E. (2015). Georgia on my mind? Russian sanctions and the end of the ‘Rose Revolution’. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 6(2), pp. 161-170.

The evolving 'European Security Equilibrium' should also address this question: are these points still relevant for the EU policy toward the South Caucasus?

The role of Turkey in the region also needs to be revised by the EU: to what extent does Turkey represent NATO in the South Caucasus? How Turkey's role might be restrained under the 'New European Security Deal'? What are the limits of Turkish power in the region? If NATO and EU are not willing to extend to the East, should Turkish presence in the region be considered as NATO's involvement?

As it was stated in the previous sections, Azerbaijan copied many military elements from Turkey – hence from NATO. Are Azerbaijan-Turkey relations equal to Azerbaijan-NATO relations? Addressing these questions, might create a new 'European Security Equilibrium' and address many issues, which are still ambiguous.

Currently, EU's involvement in the region is established via the 'European Partnership for Peaceful Resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict' (EPNK). This platform has become very important for the participation of civil society actors in the regional processes. EPNK was successful so far by bringing in different researchers and members of different communities, and by providing a platform for dialogue among various actors involved to the NK conflict and peacebuilding. The EU's efforts within EPNK need to be extended to the people on the ground also – to the main parties of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; Armenians and Azerbaijanis from Nagorno-Karabakh still are left at the side-lines of the negotiation process. EU's involvement in this area might bring satisfactory results and scale down the militarist trends in the conflict. Continuation of these efforts might help to resolve the regional conflicts, alongside increasing Russian-Turkish presence in the region.

In sum, the Caucasus has always been a hot-spot for the geopolitical clashes. The global development trends were almost immediately felt in the region. The EU-Russia and USA-Russia relations are no exception. Throughout centuries, the region has developed its own immunity to the geopolitical challenges. The so-called 'New-European Security Deal' might lead to increased influence of the regional powers, and strong regional co-

operation practices on economic and political affairs. There is also hope that the positive trends might stimulate the resolution of regional conflicts and help the parties to reach consensus.

## **Conclusion**

In many cases, the current geopolitical realities open new questions to the existing problems, rather than addressing them.

Even so, the 'New European Security Equilibrium' starts a new phase for the future of the South Caucasus countries and regional conflicts. The Trans-Atlantic community's restructuring of their foreign policies toward Russia leaves no option for the regional countries, but closely align themselves with the regional players, namely, Russia, Turkey and Iran.

So far, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia chose different speeds of their advancement toward the Trans-Atlantic community. The new geo-political reality and security equilibrium can further slow-down the integration of the South Caucasus countries with the EU institutions and NATO.

Armenia has chances to further stay in the political and military alliance with Russia, Georgia might not have a positive vision of its membership in the EU institutions and NATO; Azerbaijan will be restrained in the Russia-Turkey and Russia-Iran relations.

Turkey's role in the region should also be clarified: is Turkey acting in the region on behalf of NATO, or not? This revision will also affect the EU-South Caucasus relations.

The so-called 'New European Security Paradigm' introduces a new reality for the regional conflicts also. Russia will have the natural monopoly over Nagorno-Karabakh and other conflicts. Russian-Turkey rapprochement might help Azerbaijan to gain the upper hand and change the status-quo.

Under the new 'European Security Deal', the rise of the regional powers in the South Caucasus is expected. The Russia-Turkey and Russia-Iran relations might be decisive in regional affairs and the resolution of the conflicts in the region.

## Russia-West Confrontation and the Future of European Security: Global Trends and Regional Consequences\*

*Elkhan Nuriyev\*\**

Obviously, Russia's relations with the West have seriously deteriorated over the past several years. This relationship is now worse than during the Cold War period. Some already have called the new situation the beginning of a new Cold War.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, there is a risk that Russia-West confrontation may further escalate and that a structural, if not strategic, conflict is emerging with possible significant consequences.

But yet what is currently happening in West-Russia relations is not a new Cold War; it is not even a renewed East-West divide. It is a grand high-

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<sup>1</sup> For interesting overviews, see Richard N. Haass, "Cold War II" Project Syndicate, 23 February 2018, <<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/new-cold-war-mainly-russia-s-fault-by-richard-n-haass-2018-02>>, accessed on 02.10.2018; Sergei Karaganov, "The West's Unilateral Cold War" Project Syndicate, 20 March 2018, <<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/west-and-russia-no-new-cold-war-by-sergei-karaganov-2018-03>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

stakes geopolitical game that has been fueled by decades of mutual mistrust and competing interests of great powers.

The current international situation reminds one of a chess game in which kings, queens, and pawns are moved with the illusion of an absent opponent, neglect for his possible moves, and unawareness of potential positions of the opposing chess pieces. Yet in this game the chessboard is a very real battlefield with such hotspots challenging global security as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea and other modern pivot states. The ability to see the entire battleground is therefore crucial. Meanwhile, as the true positions of the rival players on the Eurasian chessboard are unknown to Western decision-makers, they are just moving chess pieces around, without knowing how to take the king. That is precisely why the United States, NATO and the EU often move their pieces down the flanks of the grand chessboard to avoid the center, where their positions are more vulnerable.

Russia not only sees where major players are on the grand chessboard, it sees the entire geopolitical battleground with great clarity, round-the-clock, real time, and in all types of situations. Since President Vladimir Putin comprehends the global line-up of forces with that kind of lucidity and his Western opponents do not, Russia enjoys an advantageous position that can determine its victory.

It is no coincidence that the Kremlin leader makes moves with masterful skill – going after the West’s strategic centers of gravity with much more efficiency. Perhaps more than any other leader, Putin, by virtue of his long-time Soviet intelligence experience, understands how Western democracies operate in the contemporary world. He likewise knows how to use the West’s clout against the West itself. But while the Russian President has been making bold moves with the right motives at the right moment, and Russia has been rapidly returning to global power politics, the West has not been standing idly by. It has been relentlessly trying to contain Russia, and if necessary, reduce its growing role in international affairs.

The most striking thing for the West is how Putin is advancing Russia’s national interests against those of its rivals. True, boldness, creativity and independence are the main assets of his leadership. He always plans and thinks ahead, and then makes the right move that brings him success.

Western leaders just cannot understand how Putin has thus far managed to keep Russia ahead in the geopolitical game. All attempts by the United States and the EU, obsessed with weakening Russia at all costs, to isolate and sanction Moscow have so far proved futile. The containment strategy has had a reverse effect: it has fueled anti-Western sentiment in Russia, deepened considerable strains in the EU-Russia relations and raised the risk of an unintended flare-up with the United States.

More recently, Putin's public announcement of obtaining new nuclear weapons has sharply raised the stakes of a direct U.S.-Russia confrontation, which currently risks reaching a dangerous point. If Putin's announcement is not sabre rattling and Russia's nuclear strategic posture has indeed undergone profound changes, then it means not just an improved nuclear arsenal but a shift in the global power balance that could be called a genuine revolution in military affairs. Yet even so, Moscow is unlikely to be interested in a broader conflict. Rather, it would like to reconstruct its relations with the West as this is essential to addressing many of today's persisting challenges to global peace and security. After all, both sides share far more than just common history and geography. Their strategic, long-term interests overlap over a variety of global threats, including proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism.

In the meantime, unending mutual accusations, allegations and claims are creating an environment where mutual estrangement, misunderstanding and different perceptions are separating Russia from the Western world and dividing the West itself over how best to proceed on Russia. Areas of serious disagreement include U.S.-Russian competing military operations in Syria, Ukraine's prolonged crisis, NATO's enlargement, missile defense system, lingering conflicts in the post-Soviet Eurasian countries, escalating cyber breaches, and dependencies in the field of oil and gas. The fact that these disputes remain very much at the core of what divides Russia and the West today and that they have not yet been addressed through common efforts means that both sides are ill-prepared to strike a bargain that would account for joint security concerns.



## **A More Eurasian and Less Euro-Atlantic World**

Against a markedly different geopolitical backdrop compared to the Cold War era, the sharp deterioration of Russian-Western relations has a negative impact on the security environment in today's vastly turbulent Eurasia. Not for the first time in its long history, big geopolitics is emerging as a powerful tool in shaping the Eurasian security system. As always, Eurasia, which sits at the heart of a knot of strategic issues that surround international politics, is dominating the global chessboard. Several major players – the United States, Russia, the EU, China, and the Islamic world – have arisen today in the Eurasian chess game. Realizing that the emerging global order is being shaped by various twists and turns in the Eurasian geopolitics, they all vie for regional preeminence. Each of them pursues its own strategic goals in this resource-rich continental landmass. Each actor plays on its own and against each other, without siding openly with anyone for the moment.

Perhaps still more striking is that renewed great-power rivalries for spheres of influence and struggles for control over energy reserves and pipeline routes have uncovered the most shadowy sides of the Eurasian high-stakes game. The point at issue is the geopolitical behavior of major regional actors that have developed covert attitudes. While flirting with the West, most regional powers hide their true intentions and genuine stance and are taking joint steps behind the scenes to end the American unipolar world order. This is especially true of the Middle East, where the United States and the EU have displayed a discord over peace efforts, and sharpened regional differences between Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel.

More fundamentally, the Kremlin's military victory over the Islamic State in Syria has signaled Russia's renewed assertiveness in the Greater Middle East, provoking enormous dissatisfaction among Western powers that are not willing to share power with Moscow in the expanded region. Reinserting itself as a major power broker into the peace process, Russia has made it clear that its serious interests are protected not only in the Arab world but also in the entire Middle East where oil prices are set. How events in this long-troubled region will proceed is anyone's guess, but Eurasia's future geopolitical landscape will primarily depend on the volatile strategic

situation in Syria, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, North Korea and the CIS countries.

Already now, however, quite noticeable is a new Eurasian geopolitical axis that is being quietly and steadily formed by the Russian-Chinese tandem. The simple fact that Putin's heavyweight partners in the BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) continue to back Moscow in its sharp tussle with Washington and Brussels proves that Russia is far from being isolated. Aligning itself more closely with China, Iran and India, on the one hand, and forging good partnership relationships with Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Israel against all odds, on the other, Russia appears well prepared to confront a disordered world that NATO and the EU built after the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union. The more the West tries to rally the world against Moscow and Beijing by demonizing Russia and containing China, the sooner Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping will expand the region's political-strategic axis that may well include the post-Soviet countries.

A great Eurasian alliance may indeed abruptly appear in resistance to America's claims to world superiority, triggering a new unintended shift in geopolitical alignments. If Beijing, Tehran, Delhi and Ankara finally get fully sided with Moscow, then the game will be stopped, and the battle will end. Something like that will happen sooner or later anyway, even despite the West's attempts to slow down the final stage of the Eurasian chess game. Moreover, most regional powers view their relations with Russia as an interest-driven partnership. They may have an intention to develop new relations as allies and to commit themselves to continuously maintain strong interaction on the grounds of their mutual interests and actions prompted by shared concerns.

In uniting with Moscow for reaching common objectives, the Eurasian countries may display solidarity with Russia motivated by pragmatic reasons. Such a possible outcome may arise from region-to-region cooperation and strategic partnership-type relationships. Should this scenario happen, the world will eventually be more Eurasian and less Euro-Atlantic. But this goal can be achieved only if Russia displays readiness to assume a more meaningful leadership in global affairs and to ensure that a full-scale power shift will make the world more stable and secure than it is now.

## **Post-Soviet Realpolitik Russian-Style**

In the meantime, the post-Soviet territory likewise represents one of the major theaters of great power competition between the United States, Russia and the EU. None of the CIS countries can cope with regional security problems without external help. Most of them expect principal powers to focus their resources, determine their priorities and thoroughly review the instruments in their foreign policy toolkit. Even as several countries of Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia are seeking greater intermediary assistance from global powers, Russia and the West have become involved in the geopolitical tug-of-war over dominance in Eurasia, continuing to draw up war plans against one another. Such a complicated state of affairs explains why geopolitical shifts adversely affect peace processes in Eastern Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria.

Clearly, Russia has always considered itself a great power that should be surrounded by semi-sovereign buffer states. Even today, the Russian factor plays a key role in the security situation in the entire post-Soviet space. Despite outside strategic concerns like the ongoing crises in Ukraine, the South Caucasus and other parts of the former Soviet Union, Russia has so far taken a proactive stance in CIS affairs, trying to convince the West that the Kremlin has a major potential in resolving security issues in their own backyard. Indeed, Moscow is seeking to create new, stronger, meaningful relations with CIS countries, and all the latest political steps by the Kremlin have been aimed at enhancing Russia's geopolitical position in post-Soviet Eurasia.

Russia's successful foreign policy in the region also results from the failure of Western powers in the CIS, or continuous weakening of their positions, in the least. As a result of Washington's failure to craft any coherent vision as to how the post-Soviet territory fits into U.S. broader strategy its role is increasingly defined through the prism of Russia. The lack of a meaningful U.S. response to the challenge posed by the protracted conflicts in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus not only highlights the low level of U.S. engagement in the conflict-torn regions but also casts doubt on its ability to be an effective player in international organizations such as the UN and the OSCE.

Mostly the same is true of EU's Eastern Partnership policy, which reflects an unconcerned attitude and offers a mere pittance to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – six countries that the EU does not want to invite as full members. In effect, the EU lacks a visionary and principled approach to resolving post-Soviet regional security issues. Brussels has practically no role in conflict settlement and therefore does not have the necessary tools to intervene in the peace process, offering only confidence-building activities. Such a situation strongly limits the influence of the EU in the Eastern neighborhood and dramatically hinders Brussels' capacity to formulate a meaningful policy to deal with simmering secessionist conflicts.

This means that neither the United States nor the EU are ready to offer CIS countries a real alternative to Russian policies. The failure of the West to design a sound workable action plan for dealing with Russia's post-Soviet neighbors indicates that it is almost impossible for the United States and the EU to guarantee security for these nations. It is thus no surprise that Western powers have been unsuccessful in their post-Soviet strategies. The resulting lack of a common and integrated strategy may lead to a gradual withdrawal of Western democracies from the CIS and the loss of ground to Russia's more assertive foreign policy.

Consequently, Russia is seen as essentially having a monopoly over reshaping the security architecture in the post-Soviet space. While the Kremlin views regional security of the CIS as fundamental to their interests, Western powers simply underestimate Russia's increased role in orchestrating today's geopolitical processes in post-Soviet Eurasia.

The Kremlin may be successful in helping some CIS countries resolve ethnic conflicts, thereby fostering greater stability in the entire region. Most local leaders know well that Moscow's blessing will be a necessary precondition for any political solution or peace agreement because the Kremlin holds the key to the major security puzzles. So, many states see Russia not as a threat, but a natural ally against domestic and external threats.

The already-strained Russia-West relations could easily contribute to the future isolation of the CIS region. The Kremlin is talking more and more about the need to protect the state's frontiers and turn them into an im-

penetrable barrier against terrorists, criminals and would-be enemies. A stronger (than in the 1990s) Russia may further enhance its geopolitical clout in various, subtle ways to develop and execute problem-solving scenarios that would gratify not only Russia's interests but also those of the entire post-Soviet neighborhood.<sup>2</sup> Such a move could urge CIS political leaders to accept the Kremlin's rules and eventually integrate their countries more fully into the Eurasian Union.

Strategically, however, the Kremlin may still see former Soviet countries as protective buffer states. Through BRICS, SCO and scores of joint energy projects and counter-terrorism maneuvers, Russia collaborates closely with China, Turkey and Iran to keep CIS countries peaceful, compliant and relatively free of Western penetration. The return of global Russia may even push Moscow to view the post-Soviet world in a completely new way. The very fact that President Putin once famously noted that the collapse of the USSR was the greatest catastrophe of the twentieth century demonstrates his long-term goal to restructure the CIS by shifting away from confederation to a much more consolidated form of a new union in which economic, political and military factors are expected to dominate. Such a regional perspective best illustrates Russia's broad interests, of which Putin's Eurasian Union is but one important part.

As Russia and the West have entered a tense period of prolonged mutual distrust, the way forward for CIS countries is indeed difficult to discern. Yet the Kremlin seems to be waiting for a suitable time and favorable circumstances before putting Russia's weight behind a solution to security issues in the region: when a new, beneficial geopolitical situation that fits well into Russia's strategic interests is finally formed in the CIS territory. This is why the next few years will prove decisive in the struggle to reshape the post-Soviet neighborhood and incorporate Russia's 'near abroad' countries into a new cohesive integrated union. The final chapter of the post-

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<sup>2</sup> For more details on this issue, see, for example, Elkhan Nuriyev, "The Changing Face of the CIS", *Rethinking Russia*, 19 October 2016, <<http://rethinkingrussia.ru/en/2016/10/elkhan-nuriyev-the-changing-face-of-the-cis/>>, accessed on 02.10.2018; Elkhan Nuriyev, "How the West Helps Putin Fulfill His CIS Strategy" *The Moscow Times*, 6 April 2014, <<http://old.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/how-the-west-helps-putin-fulfill-his-cis-strategy/497604.html>>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

Soviet states is therefore still being written, and there is much work to do before long-term stability and lasting peace are firmly rooted in this part of the world.

### **A New European Security Order: Realities, Challenges and Prospects**

As it was the case a century ago, the world is again facing a challenge: how to establish European security in view of changed realities? This is the most important task the politicians face at present.

World politics often is about different psychologies, different narratives, various perceptions of reality and about the persistence of historical experience, in particular that having to do with war, conflict, violence and oppression. Europe is replete with bitter historical memories and many of them can be felt in modern international relations.

Although relations between Russia and the West are still marked by conflicting interests and different interpretations of each other's strategic aims, there is room for them to listen, understand other perspectives, and try to de-escalate tensions. A major challenge in finding a new stable architecture for European security lies in bridging the psychological gaps between the various sides, which are created by perceived differences in values and goals. What is needed is a sense of realism on all sides involved and this requires a carefully crafted action-oriented negotiation, by which differences are contained and commonalities are accentuated – a well thought-out international diplomacy that might become as important as the policy of *détente* was in the 1970s.

Restarting a constructive relationship between Russia and the West is indeed essential to addressing many of today's more difficult challenges to international peace and security. The road to settling European problems encompasses the search for joint responses to new risks and threats. The subject matter experts should thoroughly examine the current situation and derive conclusions about the kind of Europe all the Europeans want to build and how they want to live in the twenty-first century. To do that, Russians, East Europeans and Westerners need to cast aside past dogmas and recipes in the area of security policy.

Moscow, Brussels and Washington should seek to identify common ground on which to build trust and confidence and to see whether they can create a trilateral relationship, which is characterized by stable expectations of the strategic intentions of all parties involved. This, in turn, may help to restore a crisis management dialogue channel and to resolve outstanding conflicts, even though for the time being strategic competition and joint attempts at problem solving will somehow have to coexist in relations between Russia and the West.

Put bluntly, Kremlin decision makers should reconcile themselves with the idea that Russia will not get far by seeking a veto over developments in Europe. In turn, East Europeans need to accept that it is in their own interests not to emphasize what divides them from Russia, but rather what brings them together. Past failures in conflict resolution will be now, under a more critical political situation, even more difficult. Hence, every state with separatist movements in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus has to find a new balance between engaging with and balancing Russia. The United States should reconcile itself with the fact that the world is indeed moving towards a more multipolar order and that new competing centers of power are emerging. This may require fresh approaches towards coexisting with these rivals on the U.S. part.

It is nevertheless tremendously relevant today to understand Russia's contemporary geopolitics under President Putin administration. For the United States, understanding the high price Russia is willing to pay to regain its influence in the post-Soviet Eurasia is imperative to developing a coherent and viable strategy. For Russia, realizing the long-term costs of its assertive foreign policy actions in the CIS territory is urgently required. For the EU, the question about how to end the ongoing crisis in Ukraine in particular and how to alleviate the situation of uncertainty in other countries of the common neighborhood with Russia in general has become increasingly important in recent years.

Consequently, there is a strong need for a practical solution, based on the fact that new conflict resolution mechanisms can stimulate a new European security order where Russia can advance its interests by acting within the system and from which other post-Soviet countries do not perceive a threat against their national security. This suggests convening a European Strategy

Group, where Russia and the EU can exchange views on European security and seek solutions to today's complex challenges.

It would be an opportune time to begin solving the most pressing problems with the mutual exchange of information and with the establishment of joint contact groups of representatives of different organizations that are dealing with the vital issues of the European agenda. Then, coordination could be intensified on the basis, *inter alia*, of agreements on the mechanisms for adopting coordinated, mutual decisions. An example would be the conduct of the peacekeeping operations and civilian monitoring missions using the material resources and infrastructure of the OSCE, CSTO, and the EU.

In general, the OSCE remains the preferred vehicle for a wider security dialogue and cooperation in Europe. It is important that all OSCE member states understand that the Europe of the twenty-first century should be free of both new and old dividing lines. The elaboration of a new security model is hence a concrete means of reaching that goal.

Clearly, a good option for renewed security dialogue could be a new conference for security and cooperation in Europe – “OSCE 2.0” which would revive the Helsinki Final Act's forgotten instruments and put all post-Soviet territorial conflicts on the table. That would mean the return of the OSCE as a security organization and not only as an administrator of regional conflicts like in the past. All this requires strategic debates about a new European security order by the EU, Russia and the US.

However, the OSCE itself needs to be transformed and strengthened. The organization should play a more proactive role in European security affairs. That is why a more energetic approach is required to improve the OSCE institutions and mechanisms for better use, including putting into practice the regional tables that proved valuable at the time of building a new European security order. Initiating this process aimed at consolidating regional stability in post-Soviet territory could result in the creation of an “Eastern Table” for conflict resolution in Ukraine, Moldova, and the South Cauca-



sus.<sup>3</sup> Harmonizing relations between NATO and the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) should also become “OSCE 2.0” priorities.

### **Looking Ahead: Forever Adversaries or Genuine Partners?**

Evidently, Russia remains a vital element of the rapidly developing European security order. Rethinking Russia could therefore start with considering it not as a threat to the West but rather as a critical contributor to Europe’s evolving security system. Instead of blaming President Putin for everything that goes wrong in world affairs, Western leaders should answer one fundamental question that is essential for building an up-to-date European security system: Can Russia and the West ever become genuine partners, or will they remain forever adversaries?

This poignant *question* makes us consider broader, more politically sensitive *questions*: Do Russia and the West have the capacity to learn from history? Are they destined to go on making the same mistakes over and over again? Are they going to cooperate internationally in ventures that can unite them and help build a safer Europe and hence a peaceful world, or will they fail that test? These are perhaps the most difficult questions for the international community to answer as they concern the future of Russian-Western relations in the coming years. The answers to them may be yes and no.

Both sides may still find understanding through learning the implications of past follies and errors, and committing themselves to seeing the signs of the new times and the meaning of change. True, geopolitical games are endless in nature. Sometimes they even become dangerous, especially when players breach the established rules and cross the red lines. An illustrative example is the Ukraine prolonged conflict – quirky, infuriating, intriguing, and wearying – that has definitively posed an “Eastern Question” to which

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<sup>3</sup> “Eastern Table” comprising a dedicated group of experts on Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus should be created to discuss and seek solutions on regional conflicts, which would then be integrated into a wider pan-European security model. This Eastern Table should also deal with regional economic issues and transnational security threats in order to provide a conflict foresight and a rapid response capacity with a special focus on confidence and security building measures.

Moscow, Brussels and Washington have so far failed to find a clear answer. That is largely because Russia and the West are engaged in fighting the Ukraine crisis instead of trying to solve it in earnest.

Addressing the Eastern Question requires building a new European security architecture that is comprehensive, flexible and acceptable to all. Neither Russia nor the West needs the reemergence of Cold War-like security blocs which present serious risks to European stability. Instead they need a new model of international relations that would convert Europe to a better and safer system of comprehensive security. This is a policy of the necessity to forge a new cooperative security system in which Russia, the United States and the EU may well become founding members.

Time has shown that the United States and the EU have no credible strategies for containing Russia. Therefore, even in the highly violent, imperfect world that exists today, finding a middle ground between reconciliation and confrontation could be a positive outcome. Delaying to do so would merely make the endgame much worse. If the United States and the EU want to ensure a safe future for Europe, it should reconsider the European security order and keep the door open for a cooperative security relationship with Russia.

To succeed, Western leaders must change their approach to the Eurasian endgame, rejecting the assumptions that have shaped their policies since the beginning of the post-Cold War crisis of the world order. In order to confront emerging global challenges together and to enhance tomorrow's prospects, both sides will have to demonstrate willingness to enter into talks without any preconditions. The key to success in the negotiating process is finding mechanisms that would harmonize relations between NATO and CSTO and between the EU and the EEU. And perhaps attempts to design a roadmap for a new mutually beneficial agreement may ultimately end the endgame.

Obviously, the security of Russia and the West cannot be guaranteed if both are isolated from each other. A prudent attitude would save the trouble for Moscow, Brussels and Washington to relearn the painful lesson that isolationism is the road to disaster. Although the voices of division remain strong, the new security environment facing both Russia and the West is so

unstable and challenging that only continued dialogue will help them find solutions. But those challenges can indeed be transformed into opportunities if Russia and Western powers take responsibility and decisive action. Those who argue otherwise are caught up in the trap of outdated nineteenth-century geopolitics that has nothing to do with today's realities.

Although the endgame to any crisis is difficult to predict, today is a better time for top leaders of both Russia and Western powers to nudge their nations away from the brink of a no-holds-barred nuclear arms race and to reconstruct global security order in a harmonious international arrangement of major world powers. Otherwise, the future of European security will look too gloomy for the West and Russia to be able to survive in.

## **Russia and the EU: from Imbalance to a New Equilibrium in the South Caucasus**

*Boris Kuznetsov*

After 2014, Russia's political relations with the European Union are characterized by mutual alienation, although in different member-states of the EU its degree varies quite widely. During the past four years, the situation has worsened. The EU introduced several sanction packages directed against Russia. However, leading states of the EU, Germany and France, have not ceased political contacts with Russia, but the content of these contacts has become significantly poorer, the format has narrowed, and the tone has escalated.

There is no reason to believe that the situation will quickly change in favour of Russia. France did not turn to Gaullism and thus did not become the leader of the moderate trend in the EU. The new president, Emmanuel Macron, still hopes to play the role of Europe's leading policy in relations with Russia as he has demonstrated recently during St. Petersburg Economic Forum. However, these ambitions will not realize in practice. In addition, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has lost the leading role on this track, and Germany will not soon be able to restore its former position.

The conflict between Britain and Russia that arose in March 2018 over the "Skripal case" leads to an expansion of the number of active participants in "hybrid war." The United Kingdom has finally become a combatant of this initially US – Russia confrontation. Now it is noticeable the desire of UK to connect the EU countries, first of all Germany and France, to a more active confrontation with Russia. One of the specific goals of this campaign is, apparently, the compulsion of Germany to abandon the Nord Stream-2 gas pipeline project from Russia to Germany via the Baltic Sea.

The current mutual alienation of the EU and Russia is now at a point of grave imbalance. Under certain conditions, it can degrade to the level of confrontation existing between Russia and the United States. It is possible, in principle, that at some stage, the national interests of the leading states of

the EU will prevail. As a result, serious discrepancies will arise between the US-British core of the West, to which Sweden, Poland and the Baltic States have joined, and the nucleus of the European Union (Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Finland, Austria), on how to deal with Russia.

So, we should proceed from the premise that Russia-EU relations will deteriorate for the next 3 to 5 years, although, it will not reach the level of confrontation that is typical for current Russia-US relations.

While it is completely unclear in what direction Moscow should begin to build future relations between the EU and Russia. The model of these relations, which existed from the beginning of the 1990s until the Ukrainian crisis, was based on the assumption of closer interaction between Russia and the EU, as well as the consistent and growing internal “europeanization” of Russia itself. This model of relations no longer exists and cannot be restored in the foreseeable future. A new model is not yet defined.

Nevertheless, Russia’s practical needs now require some alleviation of tension in relations with the European Union. This obvious and understandable desire of Russia, which found itself in a difficult international situation, is consonant with the aspiration of many countries, mainly Western and Southern Europe, to normalize economic ties with Russia. What should Moscow do in this regard?

For Russia, the unity of the European Union is of positive significance in the presence of two factors. First, when a united Europe acts as a sovereign counter-weight to the United States, as independent centre of power. Secondly, when the general policy of Europe towards Russia is not determined and not blocked by countries that have historical claims to Russia. It should be borne in mind that in the foreseeable future, none of these conditions is feasible in practice. Russia conducts business simultaneously with the EU as a supranational entity and with individual EU members on a bilateral basis, sharing issues according to the competence of national and supranational structures.

Until the European Union takes its place as an independent strategic actor, the centre of gravity of Russia’s policy toward the EU will lie in the trade, economic, investment and financial spheres. In addition, it makes sense to

actively develop scientific, cultural, educational cooperation with the EU, improve transport and other communications with Europe, develop tourism and communication between people. Political and even military-political issues should not be removed from the agenda of the Russian-European dialogue. However, it must be remembered that the opportunities for practical interaction with neighbours in these areas are severely limited.

The policy of Russia is determined by its interests. For the foreseeable future, the EU remains not just the main, but the dominant economic partner of Russia. Accordingly, Russia's main interest toward the EU is the normalization of trade and economic exchanges, investment and technological cooperation, scientific and cultural exchanges, and connections between people. In essence, this means a gradual easing of the practical significance of the sanctions imposed by the EU against Russia, and the improvement of the overall atmosphere of relations.

However, the sanctions themselves cannot be mitigated, as long as there is no meaningful progress in implementing the Minsk agreements on the Donbass. And this is hampered by the obvious and understandable reluctance of Ukraine to fulfill the obligations assumed by Ukraine in 2015. This situation will last at least until the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine, scheduled for 2019, but are likely to continue for a long time after these elections.

In the current situation, it makes sense for Russia to think through a strategy of unilateral steps that will not be aimed at lifting sanctions (this should not be expected), but rather a gradual change in public opinion in the EU countries. In addition to Donbass, Russia could offer the European Union closer cooperation in the search for an acceptable settlement formula for all parties. The most promising in this respect is Transnistria. In this sense, Moscow could apply the same approach as for Ukraine; the priority of Russian politics is people, not territories. Obviously, Transnistria, although economically subsidized by Russia, is drifting towards the European Union. In fact, Moldova presents for Russia a limited economic interest – many times smaller than Russia for Moldova. For many reasons: geopolitical, internal political, but also purely economic – there can be no question of any serious integration of Moldova in the EAEU.

A shift in the solution of the Transnistrian conflict would mean launching a positive dynamic in relations between Russia and the EU. Efforts in this direction have been made repeatedly, though unsuccessfully, in particular in 2003 and in 2011 (in the latter case in cooperation with Germany). But in the current conditions, the importance of success could be greater than when the Russian-European relations were in a much better condition.

The South Caucasus continues to be critically important to Eurasian security. The outbreak of tensions in April 2016 between Armenia and Azerbaijan introduced new uncertainty and confrontation to the region. In this sense, conflict resolution between Georgia and Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia seems more complicated. The subject of an active dialogue with the participation of Russia, Germany, France and, possibly, other EU countries could in this case be the improvement of the situation as well as increasing military and political predictability in the region. However, all sides can provide more effective coordination within the framework of Geneva talks, especially resolving humanitarian issues in the disputed areas.

Anti-terrorism has already been proclaimed a potential area of common interest in spite of existing contradictions, but up until now there have been no concrete steps to realize those ideas. As the Caucasus becomes ever more influenced by dynamics in the Middle East, such cooperation requires practical steps. To prevent and respond to these threats, Russia can still enhance its military presence in the region. But, above all, it needs active regional diplomacy. Russia must maintain a balance between Armenia and Azerbaijan and firmly hold back both leaderships from a new military escalation. It is also important for Russia to maintain dialogue with Georgia, even in the absence of diplomatic relations. It must continue discussing options for gradually and partially normalizing relations, including on the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Although Russia's alliances with Turkey and Iran are situational and limited, some of these countries' concrete interests are close. Russia should use this to develop a new model for long-term relations with Turkey and Iran in Syria and the Middle East in general. If based upon mutual trust in the military-political sector and a common understanding of the challenges directly impacting the security of each country, these relations could substantially improve the security of Russia's southern regions, from the Black Sea to the Caspian.

To meet increasingly serious regional challenges, Russia's foreign policy must clearly identify Russia's interests and objectives and outline Russia's strategy for achieving them at both the regional and national level. The focus should be on cooperation wherever possible to create a regional security environment. Achieving a reasonable level of pragmatic cooperation in a *modus vivendi* relationship is the key task in a mid-term perspective.

In the long term, Russia and the European Union could create a new platform for political relations instead of an irreplaceable integration agenda. Such a platform could be an equilibrium based on good neighbourliness, openness, mutual respect for value, social and political differences and cooperation on the basis of mutual interests. In the emerging geo-economic, geopolitical and geostrategic complex of Greater Eurasia, the renewed Russia-EU relations in this way could become one of the factors of regional stability.





# Isolation and Conflict Resolution

*Daut Apsanba*

## Introduction

Looking at the map of the world, one can see a pattern with colourful spots identified various countries of the world, many of those colourful spots are surrounded by bright blue of oceans and seas. However, the world is much more complex than that one depicted on the political world map. All over the world there are those places and territories that are yet to be coloured – the so-called contested territories. Since all of them vary deeply in their structures, status and aspirations, there are a lot of various terms one comes across in academic and scholarly literature: from breakaways to de-facto states and frozen conflict zones. Surprisingly, the map of Europe is particularly rich in these territories and many more try to join the group of these contested territories. One might wonder why the most prosperous and most integrated part of the world is home to so many of these territories, unfortunately, there is no one simple answer that can be applicable to each and every case, as each case is a unique combination of history, identity and politics.

The massive transitions that took place in the last decade of the twentieth century related to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end to the bipolar world system, created a vacuum on what used to be the territory of the USSR. Soviet Union became a part of history, without going through a proper dissolution process, which would allow to stabilise and define the relations between the entities with varying degrees of statehood. The void created by the collapse of the Union on its former territory was very quickly filled with growing nationalism and many different and sometimes overarching national projects. These projects were accompanied by wars, which led to the creation of what many refer as frozen conflicts of Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In late 2014 these territories were joined by Donbass territories (Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic). Again, all of these territories are very much different from each other, at the same time, one of the main similarities is

the fact that all of them are located within the geographical territory of the European Union's neighbourhood, within Eastern Partnership program to be precise. Paradoxically, there is no single country in the Eastern Partnership that does not have a territorial conflict, except for Belarus. Having so many of these "other" territories in its immediate neighbourhood, Brussels should develop a policy on how to effectively and meaningfully engage and interact with them.

This paper will focus on one of these *other* territories – Abkhazia, after a brief overview of the history of the conflict the paper will touch upon the present-day situation in and around Abkhazia. The paper will focus on the engagement or rather on the lack of engagement of the outside world with Abkhazia and the effects of it on the long-term conflict resolution process. In the final part of the paper, the author will look into possible scenarios that could help de-freeze the political deadlock in relation to the negotiations process and conflict resolution.

### **A Quarter of Century of Conflict**

The year of 2018 is a remarkable one for the modern history of Abkhazia: this September Sukhum will be celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence and a month earlier it will be marking the 10 years since the first international recognition of Abkhazia.<sup>1</sup> The war that broke out between Abkhaz and Georgians in early 1992 and finished 13 months with the victory of the Abkhaz has consequences that are still very much visible and noticeable even in present time. The war had immensely damaged and changed the socio-economic conditions and ethnic composition of once one of the most prosperous parts of the Soviet Union. The war was followed by an economic blockade that virtually cut off post-war Abkhazia from the rest of the world; the only lifeline for Abkhazia at that time was the sea border with Turkey and the support of the Abkhaz diaspora residing on the other side of the Black Sea. Meanwhile, the numerous rounds of negotiations around the status of Abkhazia and conflict resolution were not

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<sup>1</sup> Russia Backs Independence of Georgian Enclaves. The New York Times, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/27/world/europe/27russia.html?hp>>. Retrieved 18.05.2018.

very productive. After the August war in South Ossetia in 2008, Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The new round of negotiations named Geneva International Discussions (GID), co-chaired by Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) was launched in October 2008.<sup>2</sup> The GID brings together the representatives of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Georgia and Russia, as well as the USA to the negotiation table, however, all of the sides participate in the discussions in their expert capacity, which has limitations in reaching any binding agreement.

After the recognition of Abkhaz and South Ossetian independences by Russia in 2008, the EU found itself in a position where it has lost the little influence it had on the entities prior to the developments of August. In the meantime, Moscow signed a number of bilateral treaties with Sukhum,<sup>3</sup> establishing close partnership between the two capitals. The most important is the treaty on the deployment of the Russian military basis on the territory of Abkhazia, this is seen as the main guarantor from any attempts to resolve the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict by any means but peaceful; this is considered as one of the main aspects of the Abkhaz-Russian relation, as Georgia has failed to agree on signing the non-use of force agreement between Georgia and Abkhazia. The cooperation between Sukhum and Moscow spread beyond the security aspects and included a number of economic and social cooperation agreements. In almost 10 years Russia became the main strategic partner of Abkhazia and the cooperation between two countries deepened and now covers a lot of spheres and areas, tying Sukhum closer to Moscow.

Geographically Abkhazia remains in a very close proximity to the European Union and is a part of the Eastern Partnership of EU, again, at least, geographically. After 2008, Brussels found itself in a rather intricate situation where it had to refine its policy on engagement with Abkhazia; on one

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions. <<https://www.un.org/undpa/en/UNRGID>>. Retrieved 18.05.2018.

<sup>3</sup> Сегодня Россия подпишет соглашения с Абхазией и Южной Осетией об охране границы. Caucasian Knot, <<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/153576>>. Retrieved 18.05.2018.

hand, the EU did not plan on recognizing Abkhazian statehood, and on the other, Brussels wanted to keep presence in Abkhazia (not necessarily a direct one). The Monitoring Mission deployed by the European Union (EUMM) under its ESDP program has no access to Abkhazia or South Ossetia and therefore it cannot be considered a mechanism that can play a noticeable role in Abkhazia. These two main principles were put into a policy called “Non-recognition and Engagement” that was unveiled in 2010 by the EU Special Representative to South Caucasus Peter Semneby.<sup>4</sup> The main objective of the policy was to find a solution, acceptable for all parties to conflict, and address the two main principles of the EU’s approach towards to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict.<sup>5</sup> This policy was further and slightly modified and broadened to include the USA and is currently referred as the policy of “Engagement without Recognition.”<sup>6</sup> Neither of these policies was directly aiming at the resolution of the conflict, but rather to increase the presence of the EU in Abkhazia. After almost a decade since the policy was first presented, it had very limited success and today Abkhazia finds itself in much deeper isolation from the outside world than prior to 2008.

There are a number of reasons for such a situation, one of the main obstacles for the full deployment of the EU’s policy on engagement and non-recognition of Abkhazia was practically blocked with the introduction by the Georgian government of the law on the “occupied” territories. The law is preventing any type of direct engagement with any institution in Abkhazia, public or private.<sup>7</sup> The law and the strategy on the so-called “occupied”

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<sup>4</sup> Semneby, P., *The EU, Russia and the South Caucasus – Building Confidence*, 25.03.2012.

<sup>5</sup> Semneby, P., *Speech in front of National assembly of Council of Europe in Paris, 17 January 2011, “On perspectives of engagement, dialogue and cooperation to address the consequences of the war between Russia and Georgia: a forward looking approach.”*

<sup>6</sup> Cooley, A., Lincoln, L. M., *Engagement without Recognition: A New Strategy toward Abkhazia and Eurasia’s Unrecognized States*, *The Washington Quarterly*, 33:4, October 2010, pp. 59-73.

<sup>7</sup> «Закон об оккупированных территориях», «Государственная стратегия в отношении оккупированных территорий», распоряжение Правительства Грузии об утверждении правил для работы организаций, осуществляющих деятельность на оккупированных территориях Грузии.

territories addresses the main concerns of Tbilisi, where with more engagement with Sukhum might lead to “creeping” recognition. The Venice Commission also raised concerns on some of the aspects of the law on the “occupied” territories, perceiving that certain parts of the law would limit access to Abkhazia.<sup>8</sup>

### **Isolation Abkhaz Way**

When one talks about isolation, it is worth clarifying and framing the scope of the meaning of the term isolation, experienced by the population of Abkhazia. There are many issues and challenges related to isolation and the situation with the protracted and unresolved conflict that is affecting the daily lives of people. Three issues stand out above all.

Firstly, the limited freedom of movement of residents of Abkhazia. Abkhazia and its residents have little or no access to the outside world, except for unlimited access to Russia; for travel, studying and trade. Moreover, the majority of the population of Abkhazia was issued Russian passports in a simplified procedure prior to 2008. After the recognition, the simplified procedure of Russian passport issuance was changed and this led to a growing number of youth that only have the Abkhaz passport, which only allows them to travel to Russia. At the same time, the Russian passports are now being issued by a Russian embassy in Sukhum; these passports have a limited usage, as a lot of countries do not recognize them.

Secondly, residents of Abkhazia do not have access to any international structures or economic mechanisms that could support the development of

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<sup>8</sup> В своем докладе от 3 февраля 2009 г. Генеральный Секретарь ООН отметил, что некоторые запретительные положения «Закона об оккупированных территориях» вызывают беспокойство у международного сообщества с точки зрения доступа гуманитарных организаций в зоны, пострадавшие от конфликта. По этому поводу высказалась и Венецианская комиссия, отметившая ряд положений, на которые грузинским властям следует обратить особое внимание. European Commission For Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) Opinion On The Law On Occupied Territories Of Georgia. Adopted by the Venice Commission At its 8<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session (Venice, 13-14 March 2009), <[http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2009/CDL\(2009\)004-e.asp](http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2009/CDL(2009)004-e.asp)>.

the territory and could also address the needs and the challenges that the society is currently facing.

Thirdly, any official documents issued in Abkhazia are not recognized internationally, except for Russia, meaning that any student graduating from Abkhaz State University or any other academic institutions in Abkhazia and wishing to continue his or her education abroad cannot be accepted to any university in Europe or elsewhere due to the fact that they come from Abkhazia.

The isolation has particularly negative effects on the conflict resolution process in long-term, as isolation and lack of contacts with the rest of the world is further strengthening the existing sentiments and perceptions about the dynamics of the conflict. The isolation is particularly harmful for the younger generation – the so-called post war generation. The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, as well as the rest of the *frozen* conflicts in the South Caucasus, are protracted conflicts, with very little space or interest from the sides for the discussions, as the sides' positions are mutually exclusive ones, with the *status quo* becoming a permanent reality and where the respective elites have learned on how to live with the conflict. Such a situation would mean that a dramatic shift or an event can change the existing *status quo* and would start a negotiation process anew. Dramatic events or a change of political or a geopolitical situation could renew armed hostilities.

In the current realities and after the consequences of the Georgian move on South Ossetia, the attempt to resolve the conflict by military means is rather unlikely; equally unlikely is any change of the geopolitical situation that would meaningfully alter the situation in relation to the Georgian-Abkhaz context. This leaves the peaceful means as the last and only resort to the resolution of the conflict. Peaceful process will take more time and therefore, the peaceful resolution of the conflict will be at the hands of the future generation. However, the youth of Abkhazia is currently cut off from the international exchange and engagement opportunities with the greater world. Apart from pure academic and educational reasons, the lack of an intentional exposure of the youth of Abkhazia leads to the overall lack of development and the sense of further insecurity.

The isolation has two different sides to it: external and internal. Abkhazia for the last quarter of a century has been practically isolated from the wider international communities, with varying degrees of the limitations, depending on the period of time and political situation. These twenty five years have evolved in such a situation, where more and more people within Abkhazia are now advocating against the previously proclaimed and supported idea of engagement with the wider international community in order to become a part of it in the future. Such a shift of the discourses is linked to the fact that the Abkhaz society has developed a sense of not belonging to the rest of world, due to the constant rejections of the attempts on how to engage with the rest of the world. This led to the further development of the so-called “inferiority complex”, which is now evolving into self-isolation, where the society in mass does not want to engage with the wider international community. This self-isolation on the other hand leads to a situation that is relatively new to the modern Abkhazia – the growth of nationalism among the youth; the youth becomes less interested in engagement and discussions related to conflict.<sup>9</sup> There was no study conducted in relation to this question, however, these tendencies are becoming more and more visible.

Georgian society and youth in particular have been exposed to many development opportunities, where investment targeted development; the youth have been involved in a great variety of education, development and exchange project. At the same time, Abkhaz societies have been deprived of similar opportunities, very few young people being able to break through the existing political barriers and get access to education in western universities. However, the majority of the population of Abkhazia has no access to these opportunities, the youth have developed a sort of fatigue, believing that all of the education opportunities and perspectives the modern world has to offer are not for them.

Such tendencies and the overall fatigue of the Abkhaz youth in relation to the opportunities for the professional realization and development on the international level leads to the lack of interest and desire to engage into a discussion of the conflict related issues. In case such a situation prolongs,

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<sup>9</sup> Discussion and monitoring of social media.



there will be very few opportunities to address the conflict resolution by future generations, as they will have even less incentives and interest in address the issues between the Abkhaz and the Georgians.

### **The Side-Effects of a Long-term Isolation**

Abkhaz and Georgian societies have been developing in very different ways in the last quarter of a century. While Georgian society have been enjoying support and assistance in building the capacity and development of the state institutions; Abkhaz society was by-and-large deprived of this, with Abkhaz state institutions being completely excluded from any international engagement. It would be rather incorrect to say that there was no assistance and engagement with the Abkhaz society; the EU was the largest donor for Abkhazia prior to 2008. More than 25 million euros were committed for projects in Abkhazia.<sup>10</sup> Most of these projects were of mainly technical nature and had been primarily targeting two areas: economic rehabilitation and humanitarian assistance. At the same time most of the funds allocated for Abkhazia are linked to confidence-building, and are primarily carried out with the assistance of the international organizations and local NGOs.

The civil society of Abkhazia today finds itself in such a position, where the government puts them under pressure due to the fact that most prominent and most influential NGOs in Abkhazia have been receiving financial support from international donors.<sup>11</sup> Due to the existing widespread mistrust of the European or as referred locally *western* assistance to the civil society of Abkhazia, the more pressure is put on the latter, because civil society is undermining the statehood of Abkhazia by engaging with international actors. There are a number of reasons for this kind of attacks; one of them is the situation in regard to the civil society in the wider region in the face of the growing tensions between Russia and the “West”; and the second reason is related to the fact that the state structures and institutions in Abkhazia have been completely excluded from EU assistance. All of the assis-

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<sup>10</sup> Popescu, N., Europe’s Unrecognised Neighbours: the EU in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, CEPS Working Document No. 260/Match 2007. p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Civil Freedoms and Non-governmental Organizations in Abkhazia: An Analytical Report, Center for Humanitarian Programmes, April, 2018.

tance has always been depoliticized and has no elements of capacity-building for local authorities. Such a limitation has always been put as a condition by Tbilisi, as any direct cooperation with the Sukhum government is perceived by them as a legitimation of Abkhaz sovereignty.<sup>12</sup> This neglect of state structures in the long-term perspective led to an extreme marginalization of state institutions in Abkhazia, who now in return question the activities of the local NGOs.

The civil society in Abkhazia is very influential, as it plays a vital role in the overall conflict-related negotiations' process, and the same time, they assist in the development of the society; advocate for reform and change of the state structures. At the same time, there are only so much the civil society can do, especially, when one talks about systematic change, which is one of the most essential components for the future conflict resolution process. The fact that the civil society of Abkhazia has been the sole recipient of the assistance and capacity-building opportunities from the EU put a significant wedge between them and the state structures. The lack of opportunities for the development and capacity-building of the officials and target institution creates less incentives for cooperation with the outside world, but it also does not allow the institutions in Abkhazia to develop and modernize, so that they can address the needs of the society. The lack of the overall development is pushing Abkhazia for the self-isolation, which will significantly decrease any perspective for the future resolution of the existing conflict.

Despite the isolation and lack of contact with the outside world, the society in Abkhazia is very vibrant and is constantly evolving, as any other society. Abkhaz society due to its history and small size is a very politicized one, it is a society that has a very strong opinion on a number of key political questions and issues. At the same time, it is a society that is suffering from limitations and issues the unresolved conflict is posing. One might start arguing and stating that this a price the society has to pay for having an independent Abkhazia, and their issues would be all gone once they decide to reconsider that. However, the last quarter of a century has provided for

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<sup>12</sup> Popescu, N., Europe's Unrecognised Neighbours: the EU in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, CEPS Working Document No. 260/Match 2007. pp. 3-4.

a contra-argument to such a statement – no matter how hard the conditions are within Abkhazia, it will not bring the Abkhaz closer to Georgians. Quite the opposite can be seen – the more pressure is put on Abkhazia, the more the image of the enemy is reinforced.

Georgia starting from Saakashvili's administration, prior to the war in August of 2008, and including the current government of Georgia, suggested a number of various "carrots" for the Abkhaz that would allow to de-isolate Abkhazia. A number of various initiatives spanning from the issuance of the so-called "status-neutral or grey passports"<sup>13</sup> that would allow Abkhaz to travel to Europe and beyond, up to the recently presented strategy named "A Step to a Better Future",<sup>14</sup> which proposed the Abkhaz a wide variety of benefits in the sphere of economy and education. However, all of these initiatives have one defining aspect to them that is not acceptable for the Abkhaz and it is the fact that all of it should be done exclusively through Georgia and under direct supervision of Tbilisi. The Abkhaz society has a very strong view point in relation to this – the society's consensus is that development should not come through or via Georgia. Such a position can be easily proved by the numbers of Abkhaz, who applied for the "neutral passports" or the number of students from Abkhazia (excluding Gal region), who took upon the opportunities to study in Georgia.

The non-willingness of the Abkhaz society to engage with the outside world through Georgia should not be put as a pre-requisite for engagement itself. The more development and engagement with the world Abkhaz society and Abkhazia encounter, the more incentives there will be for conflict resolution. This statement requires further explanation and elaboration.

### **Development as the Foundation for Conflict Resolution**

Development creates opportunities and allows for realization at the personal and collective level. The internal development reaches a point where

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<sup>13</sup> Romania recognized neutral Georgian passports for Abkhazian and South Ossetian residents, Baku Network. <<https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/2146299.html>>, Retrieved 18.05.2018.

<sup>14</sup> Peace Initiative, "A Step to a Better Future", 2018.

society aims at establishing contacts and engaging with the outside world, as there are many more incentives for discussion and negotiations. The first part of this paper focused on outlining the missed opportunities and political obstacles that prevented the meaningful engagement and development to take place. The following will deal with looking into opportunities on the level of engagement of Abkhazia with the outside world, that could in the long-term lead to conflict resolution.

As noted in the beginning of this paper, the resolution of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict will take a lot of time, and it will most likely be left for the future generations to address it in a way that would be more effective and productive. Productivity and effect will not develop in isolation, the youth of Abkhazia is in a particularly vulnerable situation: they are deprived of the chance to fully enjoy the time they live in, they do not have an opportunity to have an experience of taking a semester abroad and making friends from outside of Abkhazia. These very simple and basic things that might be taken by many for granted have very strong emotional effects. The virtual walls built around the youth of Abkhazia are further fueling the already existing negative sentiments towards the neighbour across the Ingur river. The numerous failed attempts of trying to engage with the world unless it is a meeting with Georgian students created a certain perception among young people, that the Abkhaz youth is only of interest to the world, as a part of the conflict.<sup>15</sup>

The latest surveys in Georgia show that there are many more urgent issues for the society to be addressed prior to the conflict resolution,<sup>16</sup> the recent assessment conducted in Abkhazia “Youth perspectives on peace and security: the Georgian-Abkhaz context” showed that the resolution of the conflict is not on the top of the agenda for the youth, but lack of development is.<sup>17</sup> The youth of Abkhazia, as anywhere else, faces a lot of challenges and

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<sup>15</sup> Discussions with students of Abkhaz State University.

<sup>16</sup> NDI Poll: Economy Still Top Concern for Georgians; Support for NATO and EU Stable. National Democratic Institute, Washington, DC. <<https://www.ndi.org/publications/ndi-poll-economy-still-top-concern-georgians-support-nato-and-eu-stable>>, Retrieved 09.05.2018.

<sup>17</sup> “Youth perspectives on peace and security: the Georgian-Abkhaz context”, Conciliation Resources, April 2018.

issues related to education, social inclusion, employment opportunities and space for development. These are also the issues shared by the youth in Abkhazia and that are of concerns for them. Addressing these concerns by wider engagement and exposure to the international context will allow for the self-realization of young people. Such an approach might need to shift the focus of the international assistance to Abkhazia from confidence building measures to internal development. Development has many spheres that with proper explanation and good will of the sides could become very productive and effective. These spheres include: capacity building of the institutions to carry out reform and systematic change, formal and informal education opportunities on the ground in Abkhazia and abroad. A shift of focus from pure confidence building measures to a wider one with more focus on the issues that are considered more relevant by the society and the youth, in the long-term could become a very good foundation for discussing more sensitive issues.

If one looks into the sphere of education, there are two main areas where much could be done: one is the support to the education institutions in Abkhazia in improving and adjusting their standards with the international ones, so that the students are already aware of international approaches to education processes. The university programs could be structured in a way, where they comply with the European credit system; assistance should also be given to lecturers and university administration to allow them to further develop their capacities. The university students would benefit significantly from an introduction to the modern academic writing course and so forth.

Support to education should not only stop at the level of the university, it should include the informal and non-formal education, to provide students and young professionals with spaces and platforms to engage, share and collaborate to address issues of concern within Abkhazia. All of this assistance and support could easily be carried out without alerting any concerned sides and in short time would provide for a very positive change within the youth community of Abkhazia. Addressing the education needs of the Abkhaz community from an angle of building capacity of the education workers will significantly improve the standards and criteria of the overall education, especially at the university level. This can also help in addressing the needs of acceptance of university diplomas and other educa-

tion certificates, as the education standards would be a compliance with the international ones.

Opportunities for education abroad for students from Abkhazia can evolve in a number of directions: it can start off from short-term non-degree programs, which could easily overcome the issues related to the recognition and acceptance of the documents and files from Abkhazia. There are few positive examples where students from Abkhazia were able to take part in various small scale education or youth activities, however, all of them were never systematic and a part of a wider program. Incorporation of students from Abkhazia into various education exchange opportunities and schemes, similar to ERASMUS+ or academic exchange programs of respective European Union states, would create an understanding and a belief that there would be various education opportunities for them, and it would prevent them from closing up. International practice has various examples of engagement with territories with unresolved protracted conflict in a status-neutral way (Ex. Cyprus, Kosovo, Palestine and Taiwan).

The second aspect of potential and productive engagement is the capacity building of the workers from official and other institutions in Abkhazia. This might be perceived as even more challenging and difficult than the education component, however, the development and capacity building of state institutions would allow to establish lasting and systematic transformation and reform. This will bring about the so-much needed positive change and stability that will allow to develop a much more complex and productive approach to various issues and discussions, including those ones related to the resolution of the conflict.

And all of these initiatives should be supported and carried out with a preliminary understanding and acceptance of the fact that these activities and engagement with Abkhazia will be for a time-being one-sided, only targeting Abkhazia without any preconditions. This should be clear for all sides involved, due to the fact that Abkhazia and Georgia have been developing very differently in the last quarter of a century. This disparity only fuels the existing resentment and negative sentiments.

In case the European assistance is at least partially addressing and targeting the needs that the Abkhaz society identifies as the priority ones, and help

the overall development of the society, there will be many more incentives to address the conflict related issues. One thing that also be better underscored is the fact that any European aspirations of Georgia will not be achieved fully, unless and before the conflict resolution is dealt with peacefully. EU can support Georgia in taking unilateral steps that could help the actual process of de-isolation of Abkhazia, rather than advertising widely strategies clearly not acceptable for Sukhum. Such unilateral steps should include the abolishing of the law on the so-called 'occupied territories' and signing of the non-use of force agreement between Sukhum and Tbilisi. These steps could become a starting point of the renewed negotiations process, which with proper address of the development and de-isolation aspect would benefit both sides of the conflict in the long run.

## **Conclusion**

The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict is one the many protracted and unresolved conflicts on the territory of what once used be the powerful state of the Soviet Union. The dramatic changes of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century revealed old wounds and scars that led to bloody wars and long remissions without any proper healing. The healing will take time and will require a search of a proper medicine, that search will take a lot of time and patience. Cutting off and isolating one party to conflict will never lead to a situation where a solution could be found, a solution that will allow the two nations to live peacefully as two neighbours. The development can only lay a small foundation to the long and slow process of reconciliation, which will include dealing with the past, acceptance of responsibility and readiness to coexist as two neighbours in the South Caucasus.

The isolation of Abkhazia and neglect of the needs of the society does not allow the society and its' individuals to fully develop and realize their potential, such a situation further supports the existing discourse. Constant push for confidence building measures has also proved to have many limitations and reservations, as it puts certain parts of the society, ex. civil sector, in a rather difficult and sensitive position. Excluding any elements of capacity building in EU and *Western* assistance for Abkhazia does not lead to any systematic and sustainable change or brings the conflict resolution any closer, it only reinforces the growing self-isolation of the last, meaning that there is less interest to engage with the outside world.

Overlooking the dynamics and history of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, the current geopolitical developments and processes taking place in the wider region, one can be certain that Sukhum and Tbilisi are as far as ever in terms of conflict resolution. To avoid the repetition of the events of the last quarter of a century all over again, a more pragmatic and complex process should be started, which allows Abkhaz society and Abkhazia to develop and be a part of the world.





## Transnistria Conflict Settlement Current Evolutions and Future Prospects – Lessons for the South Caucasus

D. M.

Transnistria is part of the arch of protracted conflicts in the post-Soviet space that represent islands of instability for European and regional security. While each of the conflicts has its own distinct and complex background, they are similar in lacking local ownership to advance the peace process and rely on international mediation for conflict management. Transnistria stands out as the most manageable of the protracted conflicts as it has an ongoing peacekeeping mission and an internationalized negotiation process under OSCE mandate. Transnistria is also a point of convergence between Russia and the West as their interaction set the tone for the current conflict settlement framework that has three key features.

First, unlike any other conflict in the post-Soviet space, Transnistria remains a non-violent dispute since the cease-fire accords in 1992. Despite periods of political tension between Chisinau and Tiraspol, there is a generally accepted understanding that there is no “*hard solution*” to the conflict and the parties are committed to solving it through diplomatic efforts. Nonetheless, after Russian aggression in Ukraine and increasing tension between Russia and the West, the security situation has deteriorated as the region is undergoing a noticeable military build-up. The existing peacekeeping mission based on the Joint Control Commission<sup>1</sup> is ineffective in addressing this challenge and remains a façade for the Russian military presence which European countries are reluctant to challenge.

Second, unable to reach a compromise, Transnistria has been placed under a “*deep freeze*” status. While it allows for a better containment of the conflict, the *deep freeze* status has also created an unfavourable environment where parties preserve the existing status quo without looking for a solution to

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Control Commission (JCC) is a trilateral peacekeeping force established by the 1992 ceasefire agreement. It consists of Moldovan, Russian and Transnistrian troops, later adding 10 Ukrainian observers.

advance the resolution of the conflict. Transnistria conflict settlement has been internationalized in 2005 with the launching of the 5+2 negotiation format<sup>2</sup> yet it has a low international profile and often lacks enthusiasm from key parties to reach an agreement. Only in 2016, after five years of deadlock, the negotiations process was restarted under German OSCE chairmanship. It allowed to de-escalate the security situation and manage sensitive issues, in particular, the deep economic recession in Transnistria through a series of economic appeasements. This *policy of accommodation* lacked a balanced approach as it created incentives for the Transnistrian regime without placing proper conditionalities. That is largely why the current negotiations revolve around technical issues while completely avoiding discussions on political and security problems.

Third, the protracted conflict in Transnistria is caught by the loop of identity (geo)politics reflected in the East-West paradigm. The competing political identities in Moldova generate internal tensions and drive the parties further apart from reaching a compromise, a process that is further fuelled by the increasing tension between Russia and the West. As a result, despite low levels of societal tension among the people on the two banks of the Nistru river, there is a huge gap in the public narrative promoted in Moldova and in Transnistria. Adversarial rhetoric and actions, both at the local and regional level, undermine the confidence building measures and constitutes one of the key impediments to the conflict resolution.

### **Transnistria Conflict through the Security Perspective**

A major challenge in the Transnistria conflict settlement constituted the 2014 crisis in Ukraine which changed the regional security paradigm. It highlighted a new and more assertive Russian foreign policy not only capable but also willing to forcefully intervene in its neighbourhood using hybrid methods. In early 2014, riding on the wave of instability in Ukraine, a series of disruptive actions took place in Transnistria and in the Gagauz autonomous region. A spectre of *active measures* was deployed which included the sabre-rattling through military exercises, spreading of disinformation

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<sup>2</sup> The 5+2 negotiation format includes Moldova and Transnistria as parties to the conflict, OSCE, Russia and Ukraine as mediators, EU and USA observers.

in the media and leveraging of pressure groups to stir protests. These actions had a high potential to “unfreeze” the conflict, but thanks to the stabilization of southern Ukraine and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation, the crisis was averted. Nonetheless, the security situation remains tense and the ongoing negotiation process is not effective in addressing these issues.

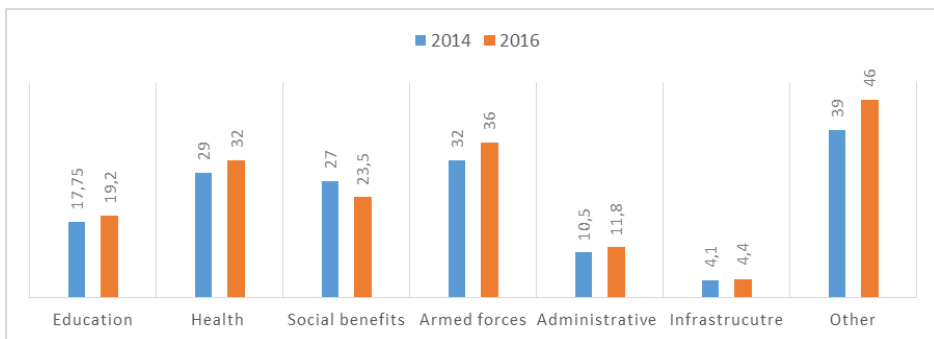


Figure 1: Transnistria Budget (2014 – 2016).

Source: Vasiloï Rosian: Security and Defence risks in the context of the Transnistria conflict settlement. Policy Brief, Institute for Development and Social Initiatives “Viitorul” 2017.

Since the Russian aggression in Ukraine, Transnistria is undergoing a considerable security build-up. Around 20percent of the budget expenditure is channelled to defense and security sectors.<sup>3</sup> From 2014 to 2016 there was a rise in budget for the armed forces from 32 mln. USD to 36 mln. USD (see Figure 1), roughly equal to the defence budget of the Republic of Moldova of 34 mln. USD by 2017. These numbers do not fully reflect all the resources streamlined to the defence sector as they do not account for the budget of the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) and other hidden Russia’s security-related subsidies in Transnistria. The additional resources were invested in personnel training, military exercises, weaponry and equipment modernisation. Reports note that since 2016, there is an

<sup>3</sup> Vasiloï, Rosian: Security and Defence risks in the context of the Transnistria conflict settlement. Policy Brief, Institute for Development and Social Initiatives “Viitorul” 2017.

exponential increase in military exercises<sup>4</sup> and joint combat applications between Transnistrian troops and the OGRF, from 48 exercises in 2016 to 150 exercises in 2017 and 54 in the first three months of 2018.<sup>5</sup> A worrisome trend is that some training scenarios include the crossing of the Nistru River – a natural barrier that separates Transnistria from Moldova. Furthermore, reports highlight that Tiraspol has increased the enrolment in the Army and that the Russian Federation is actively recruiting youth for its local military infrastructure as well as mercenaries to participate in the armed conflict in the Donbas region.<sup>6</sup>

Facing increasing uncertainty, determined by the crisis in Ukraine and the security build-up in Transnistria, Moldovan authorities responded through a series of diplomatic and security measures. First, in 2014 at the NATO Summit in Wales, Moldova requested NATO assistance for defence capacity building (DCB).<sup>7</sup> The Moldova DCB package was agreed in 2015 and was designed to update strategic documents and adjust the force structure according to the new security concept. However, due to the internal political instability in 2015-2016, the initiative registered little progress. The first advancements are expected in 2018 with the announcements of long-term defence procurement plans and a series of reforms to restructure the Mol-

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<sup>4</sup> The exercises include both humanitarian and military applications.

<sup>5</sup> Vasiloï, Rosian: Russia occupation force in Transnistria: the failure of “caviar” diplomacy and disrespect for international law. Institute for Development and Social Initiatives “Viitorul” 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, Matthias: Exclusive: Russian diplomats expelled from Moldova recruited fighters – sources. Reuters June 13, 2017. <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-moldova-russia-expulsions/exclusive-russian-diplomats-expelled-from-moldova-recruited-fighters-sources-idUSKBN1941DA?il=0>>, accessed on 01.04.2018.

Vlas, Cristi: The Ukrainian Minister of Defense: Transnistria prepares mercenaries for the war against Ukraine. Moldova.org, February 23, 2015. <<http://www.moldova.org/en/the-ukrainian-minister-of-defense-transnistria-prepares-mercenaries-for-the-war-against-ukraine/>>, accessed on 02.10.2018; <<http://www.moldova.org/en/moldovan-mercenaries-donbass-region-takes-five-seconds-kill-man-rise/>>, accessed on 01.04.2018.

<sup>7</sup> NATO/OTAN. The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2015. <[https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_01/20160128\\_SG\\_AnnualReport\\_2015\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_01/20160128_SG_AnnualReport_2015_en.pdf)>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

dovan Armed Forces.<sup>8</sup> It is worth pointing out that even with the planned increase of the security and defence sectors, Moldova remains the country with the lowest military expenditure in the region (see Figure 2). Therefore, contrary to the thesis promoted by a portion of the pro-Russian pundits community, Moldova is not shifting to a more assertive and militant policy towards Transnistria, but is rather consolidating its deterrence capabilities and its capacity to counteract against hybrid threats.

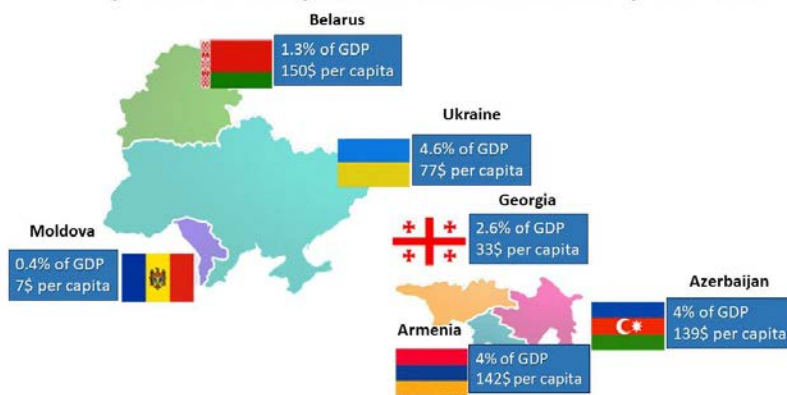


Figure 2: Defence Expenditure Eastern Partnership Countries.

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database 2016.

Second, Chisinau and Kiev are introducing joint border checkpoints<sup>9</sup> on the Transnistrian segment that would allow Moldova to regain control over its eastern borders. The joint border checkpoint between Moldova and Ukraine was suggested by the expert community since 2005 with the launch of the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) to facilitate the implementation of the joint border management between Moldova and Ukraine. The joint border control with Ukraine will also improve the capacity to tackle

<sup>8</sup> Major reforms include shifting to a fully professional army, restructuring the command structures and operational management and transition to a force structure based on light infantry.

<sup>9</sup> The idea of a joint border checkpoint between Moldova and Ukraine was suggested by the expert community in 2005, but due to the lack of political will, it was never implemented until now.

the cross-border organized crime, including illegal arms trafficking and smuggling. The current agreement and its implementation is criticized by Tiraspol and Moscow citing that it might institute an economic blockade and that it would undermine the 5+2 negotiation process. In fact, the opening of joint border crossings had little to do with applying economic pressure on Transnistria, the key reason being of political and security nature to strengthen Moldova's negotiation position and to consolidate its borders security.

Third, Moldovan authorities issued a statement calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops stationed in the Transnistria region based upon the Constitutional Court Decision<sup>10</sup> which found their presence in violation of the territorial integrity and contradicting the status of permanent neutrality. It is important to highlight that this statement included the call for the withdrawal of the Operational Group of Russian Forces that was not a part of the trilateral peacekeeping mission in Moldova operating according to the 1992 ceasefire agreement. Furthermore, Moldovan diplomacy is also pursuing the transformation of the peacekeeping mission itself from a military to a civilian one under international mandate, as the current formula has outlived its usefulness and obstructs rather than facilitates the conflict settlement process. The Western countries politically support Moldovan authorities but are reluctant to actively challenge the Russian military presence in Transnistria which is seen in Moscow as a long-term investment to obtain leverage on regional security.<sup>11</sup> A possible solution would be to design a joint peacekeeping mechanism between Russia and EU, for instance in the CSDP-CSTO configuration or tackle the problem through the existing OSCE instruments.

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<sup>10</sup> Constitutional Court Judgment No. 14 on the interpretation of article 11 of the constitution (on permanent neutrality). <<http://www.constcourt.md/ccdocview.php?tip=hotariri&docid=613&l=en>>, accessed on 20.03.2018.

<sup>11</sup> Secieru, Stanislav: The real and hidden costs of Russia's foreign policy. European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). Brief Issue 2, February 2018.

## Transnistria Conflict – Economic Perspective and the Role of International Mediation

Even though Transnistria's economy is technically separate from Moldova's they are both strongly integrated into a common economic ecosystem. According to the 2016 report by the independent think tank Expert-Grup, the level of economic convergence between Moldova and Transnistria constitutes 97 percent.<sup>12</sup> It is reflected in the Transnistria export-import structure (see Figure 3), the activity of economic actors, most of whom already operate under Moldovan legal framework, and the interdependence of the energy markets.

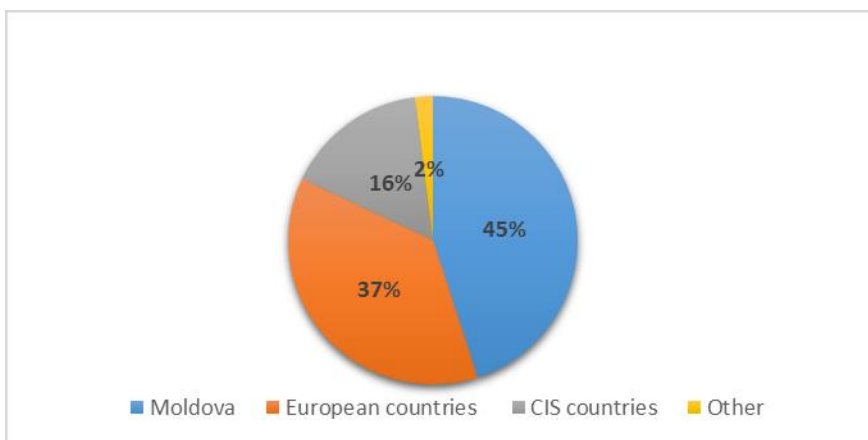


Figure 3: Transnistria import-export structure.

Source: Lupusor, Andrian: What are the economic threats for Transnistria economy in 2016-2017. Expert-Grup, Regional Economic Review No.4, July 2016.

A major challenge for the Transnistrian region is the deep economic recession it plunged into since 2015. Even though the crisis in Ukraine was a triggering factor, the main cause was the structural weaknesses of Transnistrian economy plagued by poor management, systemic corruption and over-reliance on Russian subsidies which decreased considerably since

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<sup>12</sup> Transnistria Economic Review. Expert-Grup Independent Think Tank, September 2016. <[https://www.expert-grup.org/media/k2/attachments/Realitatea\\_Economica\\_Transnistreana\\_septembrie2016\\_EN.pdf](https://www.expert-grup.org/media/k2/attachments/Realitatea_Economica_Transnistreana_septembrie2016_EN.pdf)>, accessed on 18.03.2018.



2014, as Moscow prioritized assistance to the separatist regimes in Donbass and as international sanctions took a toll on Russian economy. Transnistrian economy shrank 20 percent across all sectors in 2015 and by another 6 percent in 2016.<sup>13</sup> According to available reports, the negative trend persisted in 2017<sup>14</sup> and the predictions for 2018 show little sign of improvement. Weak economic performance prompted unpopular austerity measures which in turn generated popular discontent affecting the stability of the regime. Wary of the uncertainties that may result in case of an economic collapse, Moldova alongside the development partners involved directly or indirectly in the conflict management tacitly agreed to a series of economic indulgences. A major compromise was the continuation of the asymmetric trade deal with the EU even though the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with Moldova entered into force in 2016 alongside the Association Agreement.<sup>15</sup> It allowed Transnistria to maintain export quotas on the European market which helped to keep afloat the region's economy.

This *policy of accommodation* was part of the de-escalation efforts at the regional level between Russia and the West. A considerable success was the restart of the 5+2 negotiation process in 2016 (inactive since 2011) under German OSCE Chairmanship. It helped to reduce tensions, minimize the potential risks of a new crisis and bring back the Transnistrian issue on the international agenda. On the negative side, the policy was disproportionate as it requested concessions from Moldova without creating a conditionality framework for the Transnistrian side. This unbalanced approach prompted the reaction of Moldovan civil society which issued the “*Red Lines*” declaration on the Transnistrian Settlement.<sup>16</sup> The Declaration was received by

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<sup>13</sup> Lupusor, Adrian: What are the economic threats for Transnistria economy in 2016-2017. Expert-Group, Regional Economic Review No.4, July 2016. <[https://expert-grup.org/media/k2/attachments/RER\\_Transnistria\\_July\\_2016\\_EN.pdf](https://expert-grup.org/media/k2/attachments/RER_Transnistria_July_2016_EN.pdf)>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

<sup>14</sup> Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic Ministry of Economy Report 2017. <<http://mer.gospmr.org/otchet-o-deyatelnosti.html>>, accessed on 01.04.2018.

<sup>15</sup> Transnistrian side was invited to participate in the negotiations of the DCFTA and the Association Agreement but refused to stay at the table.

<sup>16</sup> Declaration of the Civil Society regarding the Red lines of the Transnistrian Settlement Chisinau, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016. <<http://www.ape.md/en/2016/08/declaratia-societatii>>

mediating partners (except Ukraine) as an attempt to disrupt the negotiations process because it called for the withdrawal of Moldova from the agreements on technical issues such as the Transnistrian vehicles registration plates and diplomas. However, the actual purpose of the Red Lines declaration was to outline key issues which are not currently addressed in the negotiation format such as human rights violations, scaling back of security infrastructure and the withdrawal of Russian troops according to the OSCE Istanbul Summit declaration in 1999.

Another crucial issue is the energy interdependence as Transnistria is the main electricity<sup>17</sup> provider for the right bank through the Kuchurgan power station covering 70 percent of Moldova imports, the other 30 percent being imported from Ukraine. The energy exports to Moldova constitute one of the main sources of revenue for Transnistria accounting for 40 percent of all foreign currency earnings.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the electricity at the Kuchurgan power station is produced by burning the gas imported from Russia, for which the Transnistrian side does not pay, but which still contributes to the Moldovagaz historic debt to Gazprom accounting 7 billion USD by 2017 or roughly 90 percent of Moldova's GDP by 2017.<sup>19</sup> This unreasonable arrangement is possible due to the non-transparent ownership of the Moldovagaz – 50 percent of shares belonging to Gazprom, political corruption and shadow economic interests on both banks of the Nistru river.<sup>20</sup>

In the near future, a major challenge for both Chisinau and Tiraspol are Russia's plans to reroute gas exports to Europe through the Turkish

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civile-cu-privire-la-liniile-rosii-ale-reglementarii-transnistrene-chisinau-21-august-2016/>, accessed on 10.03.2018.

<sup>17</sup> 80% of Moldova domestic electricity consumption comes from energy imports, leaving it in a highly vulnerable position from energy security.

<sup>18</sup> Devyatkov, Andrey: The Transnistrian Conflict: A Destabilizing Status Quo? FPRI, Moldova Monthly, 2017 <<https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/07/transnistrian-conflict-destabilizing-status-quo/>>, accessed on 10.03.2018.

<sup>19</sup> Lupusor, Adrian et. al.: State of the country report 2017. Expert-Grup Independent Think Tank, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Parlicov, Victor et. al.: (2017) Energy and politics: the price for impunity in Moldova. The Institute for Development and Social Initiatives(IDIS) "Viitorul" 2017.

Stream, in light of continuing tensions and ongoing legal disputes with Ukraine.<sup>21</sup> The reduction of gas exports through the Russia-West pipeline (see Figure 4) will seriously compromise the country’s energy security. To plan for this contingency, the work has already started on building an interconnector with Romania through the Iasi-Ungheni-Chisinau reverse gas pipeline. The Moldovan authorities announced that this project is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2018, but a more realistic estimate would be for the first half of 2019. If Moldova has a “*Plan B*”, Transnistria has no real alternative for the moment, rerouting the gas transit will seriously affect the region’s economy and will erode the regime’s relative autonomy prompting a change of strategy in the long-term.



Figure 4: Gas Trade Flows in Europe (2018).  
Source: International Energy Agency

<sup>21</sup> Stercul, Natalia: Moldova-Ukraine relationship in the new geopolitical framework. Foreign Policy Association 2017. <<http://www.ape.md/en/2017/10/rus-sterkul-natalya-moldavsko-ukrainskie-otnosheniya-v-kontekste-novyh-geopoliticheskikh-realij-sterkul-natalya-direktor-po-programmam-departament-vostochnyh-issledovanij-ukraina-rossiya-assotsiatsi/>>, accessed on 02.03.2018.

The economic and energy developments showcase that the status quo is slowly changing, and Russia is losing leverage in Transnistria. As this process unfolds, the security perspective will become increasingly more important and will require a more prudent engagement to avoid escalation both at the local level – between Chisinau and Tiraspol political establishments, and at the regional level – between Russia and the West. Moreover, there should already be discussion on what a “*transitional package*” for Transnistria would look like and how to incorporate a set of incentives and conditionalities to encourage long-term reforms.

### **Transnistria Conflict through the Socio-Political Perspective**

Since its independence, Moldova’s nation-building process was determined by its position as a buffer zone between two regional poles. On the one hand, the Russian Federation with a geopolitics-driven agenda based on the common soviet heritage, on the other hand, the European Union with a normative-driven agenda to facilitate the transition to market economy and democratic governance. As a result, the local politics routinely evolved around the East-West paradigm generating competing political and societal identities. This geopolitical cleavage influenced the conflict settlement process by creating artificial dividing lines between Moldova and Transnistria region, as there are no ethnic, religious or cultural divergences.<sup>22</sup> Despite low levels of societal tension among the people on the two riverbanks, there is a huge gap in the public narrative<sup>23</sup> promoted in Moldova and Transnistria that remains one of the major constraints for the conflict settlement.

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<sup>22</sup> Minzarari, Dumintru/Bucataru, Victoria: Transnistria conflict resolution at the 25<sup>th</sup> year of impasse: causes, obstacles and possible solutions. Foreign Policy Association Policy Paper 02/2018. <<http://www.ape.md/en/2018/03/dumitri-minzarari-victoria-bucataru-transnistrian-conflict-resolution-25th-year-impasse-causes-obstacles-possible-solution/>>, accessed on 01.04.2018.

<sup>23</sup> Marin, Danu/Marzac, Elena: The information war: practices, tools and impact on National Security of Republic of Moldova. In: Information warfare – the pattern of aggression, Iudial Chifu and Oazu Nantoi (eds.) The Publishing House of the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations “Ion I.C. Bratianu” of the Romanian Academy. Bucharest 2016.

A stark example of the narrative gap is showcased in the public attitudes on the perspectives of Transnistria's future. One of the few cross-comparison surveys from 2013<sup>24</sup> between Moldova and Transnistria shows the perception discrepancy of citizens on the two banks of the Nistru river. More than 75 percent of Transnistrians do not even consider the option of reunification with Moldova, almost half seeing their future as part of Russia, and 30 percent as an independent state (see Figure 5). Moreover, data shows that there is a strong preference for a Soviet-styled political system – over 50 percent, as compared to 10 percent who support a governance system modelled on Western democracies. This is largely dictated by the structure of the Transnistrian information space which lacks plurality and is heavily dominated by Russian news cycles and programming<sup>25</sup> as well as its overwhelmingly pro-Russian political establishment which developed a patron-client relationship with Moscow. In contrast, the Moldovan public has a completely different attitude, with half of the population believing that Transnistria should be integrated in Moldova, be it with an autonomous status (9 percent) or with no special status at all (38 percent). More recent data points out that the public attitude in Moldova has become even more consolidated with the majority of 64 percent considering that Transnistria should be part of Moldova without a special status while 21 percent as part of Moldova as an autonomous region. Furthermore, the Transnistrian issue is generally on the side lines of the public agenda<sup>26</sup> that indicates a low level of interest from both the policy makers and the public.

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<sup>24</sup> O'Loughi, John et.al.: Divided space, divided attitudes? Comparing the Republics of Moldova and Pridnestrovie (Transnistria) using simultaneous surveys. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, April 2013. <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289747056\\_Divided\\_space\\_divided\\_attitudes\\_Comparing\\_the\\_Republics\\_of\\_Moldova\\_and\\_Pridnestrovie\\_Transnistria\\_using\\_simultaneous\\_surveys](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289747056_Divided_space_divided_attitudes_Comparing_the_Republics_of_Moldova_and_Pridnestrovie_Transnistria_using_simultaneous_surveys)>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

<sup>25</sup> Victor Ursu, Transnistria media landscape – an incomplete picture. Institute for Development and Social Initiatives “Viitorul” April, 2017. <[http://www.viitorul.org/files/library/1.%20Media%20transnistria\\_pentru%20site.pdf](http://www.viitorul.org/files/library/1.%20Media%20transnistria_pentru%20site.pdf)>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

<sup>26</sup> Attitudes towards the country's bilateral and multilateral security relations. Magenta Consulting, February 2018. <[http://consulting.md/pic/uploaded/Rapoarte/0\\_Security%20poll\\_v5\\_Public%20PPT\\_v2.pdf](http://consulting.md/pic/uploaded/Rapoarte/0_Security%20poll_v5_Public%20PPT_v2.pdf)>, accessed on 02.10.2018.

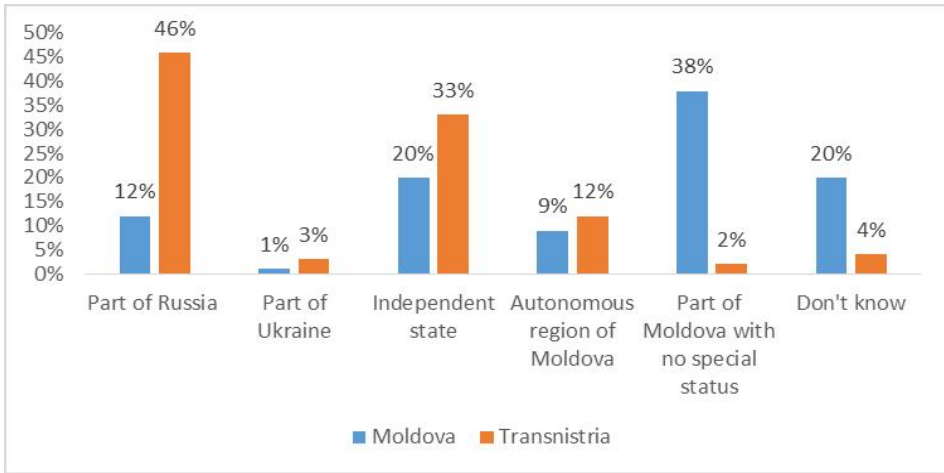


Figure 5: Opinion on Transnistria's future.

Source: O'Loughi, John: Divided space, divided attitudes? Comparing the Republics of Moldova and Pridnestrovie (Transnistria). *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, April 2013.

The current political conjecture in Moldova is highly disruptive for the Transnistrian conflict as it is symptomatic of the increasing East-West geopolitical cleavage and the rising of social polarization. The two key parties, the Socialist Party – positioned on the left-wing as a Russia-friendly party and the Democratic Party – positioned in the centre-right as a pro-European one, have hijacked the political discourse and play their respective geopolitical rhetoric. Even the new parties that emerged in the aftermath of the 2015-2016 protests had to change their anti-corruption platform and accommodate the East-West rhetoric.

The geopolitical cleavage also causes disruptions for the settlement process at the policy level as it creates parallel projects for the country's reintegration and promotes isolated negotiation formats. In 2017, two different policy documents were drafted to outline the visions for national reintegration. One was produced by the Bureau for Reintegration, part of the Government, and the other by the Presidential administration. They presented radically different approaches, especially on key issues such as the withdrawal of Russian troops, changing the peacekeeping format and designing a special status for the Transnistrian region. Furthermore, since Igor Do-

don (the leader of the Socialist Party) became president in 2016 he launched alternative negotiation platforms with the Transnistrian leadership. While not being very successful in delivering results, the uncoordinated nature of these bilateral talks caused significant concern in the Government and the civil society. Those concerns stem from their potential to revive the formula of federalization proposed by the Kozak Memorandum in 2003,<sup>27</sup> which has negative implications for Moldova and can create adverse conditions for the resolution of other protracted conflicts in the region. This possibility is especially worrisome for Ukraine which fears the “*Transnistria-zation*” of the Donbass conflict.

Western observers and mediation partners prefer the Transnistrian model in the early stages of conflict management, as it is considered a successful way to de-escalate the situation and reduce the chances of resuming violence. However, as the conflict evolves and transforms, the *Transnistria-zation* has proven ineffective in advancing the settlement process as it creates a series of obstructions. First of all, due to the protracted nature of the conflict a whole new generation of people was born for whom the conflict itself became normality. Furthermore, due to polarising public narratives, the people on the two riverbanks grew further apart thus reducing the space for negotiations at the policy-making level. Secondly, the legislative and regulatory voids in Transnistria create a *grey zone* which benefits non-state actors who engage in illegal activities such as smuggling and trafficking, or legal but dubious practices such economic and energy offshoring. This process is further reinforced by competing foreign interests in region that offer support to the parties in conflict in exchange for obtaining political leverage. Thirdly, the international mediation often comes down to compromise-building rather than conflict resolution. As a result, the negotiations revolve around technical issues such as people documentation, trade, transport and telecommunications, but the progress is slow as the

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<sup>27</sup> Kozak Memorandum was an agreement plan between Moldova and the Russian Federation aimed at designing a final settlement formula for the Transnistrian reintegration. It proposed the formula for an asymmetric federal Republic where Transnistria, as a federal subject, would have had disproportionate competences effectively granting the region a veto power over Moldova’s legislative and decision-making process. Furthermore, despite specifying a neutral and demilitarized status for Moldova, the agreement allowed the stationing of Russian troops until 2020.

problem of recognition emerges. Furthermore, the confidence building measures designed to facilitate reintegration are undermined by the political rhetoric and increasing tensions between the West and Russia.

### **Conclusion and Takeaways for the South Caucasus**

- The case of Transnistria is an example of “*freezing*” the conflict in the short-term to reduce violent confrontation but creating an unhealthy and drawn-out conflict settlement environment in the long-term.
- The fundamental challenge for the Transnistrian protracted conflict is the inability to incentivize the local actors to advance the conflict settlement agenda. It results in reduced local ownership over the peacebuilding process and reliance on international mediation which comes at the price of increasing foreign interference. It is particularly disruptive when the mediating partners have conflicts of interests, as is the case with the Russia- West confrontation.
- A critical issue in this regard is the deterioration of the security situation after the Ukrainian crisis, which prompted a military build-up in the region. The existing trilateral peacekeeping mission in Transnistria has proven ineffective in addressing this challenge and remains a façade for Russian military presence which the West is reluctant to challenge. The optimal solution would be the transformation of the peacekeeping mission from a military to a civilian one, but it would require co-opting Russians into the European security while also engaging with local stakeholders.
- The competition between Russia and the West also affected international mediation creating a framework of compromise-building rather than conflict resolution. The current 5+2 negotiation process revolves around technical issues while ignoring political and security problems. Furthermore, to avoid escalation with Russia a policy of over-accommodation for the Transnistrian regime has been put in place that does not have a balanced approach between incentives and conditionalities for advancing the conflict resolution agenda.



- Besides the security perspective, the Transnistrian case highlights how soft power and the policy of openness have transformed the conflict. While political tension was always present between Chisinau and Tiraspol, the overall approach towards the conflict settlement was to avoid Transnistria's full isolation. In the absence of a well-thought engagement strategy, the relative openness of Moldovan authorities allowed to naturally maintain a conflict-free environment and decrease the chances for the resumption of violence.
- The conflict-free environment was further maintained through confidence building measures designed to increase trust between people on both sides of the Nistru River by supporting joint activities such as the development of civil society, joint business projects and social infrastructure renovation.
- The principle of soft power however has its own limitations. An example of this limitation is the overestimation of the European Integration spill-over effect on the Transnistrian conflict. The belief that EU-driven reforms and economic opportunities in Moldova would facilitate the conflict resolution has fallen short as identity geo-politics and a new wave of information confrontation has kicked in.
- The gap in public narratives and the adversarial rhetoric, both at local and regional levels, have undermined confidence building measures and constitute key impediments to conflict resolution.

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**PART IV:  
EPILOGUE**



## Epilogue

*Frederic Labarre and George Niculescu*

The co-chairs and the RSSC Study Group's partners at Dialogue of Civilization's Research Institute (DOC/RI) congratulate themselves on completing yet another successful regional workshop in the lovely city of Minsk, Belarus. The topic was wide, but ambitious; defining a new security architecture for the Euro-Atlantic area is not an easy task in a context dominated by frozen conflicts, and "hybrid" warfare. Indecision is the natural state of such new types of geopolitical struggles, and with no "decision" no natural hegemon can emerge to dictate policy. The readers may therefore feel that this workshop and this Study Group Information (SGI) booklet fall somewhat short of their stated aims of proposing a new vision of a security architecture.

We pre-emptively counter this charge by stressing that security architectures are about what great powers want to *prevent* or want *not to happen*. Since we do not have a "real" (military/coercive) confrontation, no "real" consequences need mitigation or alleviation. Indeed, current international relations – especially in the South Caucasus – are simply too dynamic for the RSSC SG to issue a definitive statement on what kind of security architecture would fit the times, and respect the South Caucasus actors' rights.

On the other hand, had the co-chairs managed to host this topic earlier (as was intended), perhaps the conclusions would already be irrelevant. Far better to conclude that the outcome is sub-optimal now than to realize belatedly that earlier work has been done for nothing. This does not detract from the powerful insights collected in these pages, and during interactive discussions in Minsk.

Some of those insights deserve their own workshops. Prof. h.c. Schulze's claims that the EU enlargement and neo-liberal agenda frays the farther eastward the EU engages is one of those insights. Also, that the EU's troubles are not only about Russia, but about *other member states' chafing under*

*German supremacy.* With Berlin as power broker, it is mainly German-Russian relations that are driving policy. The implications for the South Caucasus are clear. All the more reasons for the countries in the region to unite into a single strategic entity to make their weight noticed, as we have been arguing since the re-start of this Study Group in 2012. Not surprisingly, Dr. h. c. Schulze proposes a “neo-*Ostpolitik*” to break the East-West deadlock. More pointedly, post-Cold War multilateral instruments like the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), proved unable to act as Euro-Atlantic security mechanisms.

Eduard Abrahamyan proposes an out-of-the-box solution with an alliance-to-alliance liaison mechanism. A very original idea, but one unlikely to see the light of day, as NATO cannot move in a decisive policy direction without the full backing of all its members. Many new members of NATO would balk at the idea of such talks. The same is true on the CSTO side; we do not see Kazakhstan or Armenia agreeing to a scheme or relations which would elevate the CSTO above national interests in Central Asia.

Evgeny Pashentsev’s paper suggests two things; first that more common challenges are emerging and that the resolution of these challenges will require a common approach, free from confrontation. Second, that the current international security order is sufficient, provided that the actors therein conduct their communications strategy honestly, that is, that words, deeds and actions must match stated intentions harmoniously. Our readers will recall two RSSC SG workshops held in November 2015 and in November 2017 pertaining to the ills and promises of media propaganda. Mr. Pashentsev’s observations had been made then too. The problem is not of a lack of European (or even Russian) security strategy and architecture, or even the inability to shape such a strategy. The problem is that the respective actors find themselves unable to *sell* convincingly such a concept.

For DOC/RI’s Maya Janik, the OSCE remains the most natural and effective Euro-Atlantic security instrument, especially if the 1990 Paris Charter is revived to make the promises of the post-Cold War era true. The Paris Charter was discussed assiduously during the 17<sup>th</sup> RSSC SG workshop, and we must be satisfied with the fact that, as far as the RSSC SG goes, this is as close to a consensus as the group came regarding a Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Alas, the OSCE remains an organization of sovereign states

many of which perceive Russia (a fellow member) as cause of regional problems in the South Caucasus and beyond. Mrs. Janik's contribution urges both sides to refrain from pursuing the momentum of enlargement into their respective peripheries. Does this mean a "neutralization" of the South Caucasus? If so, under what security guarantees? And what does this spell for a new European security architecture. Clearly, this could also be a factor of discussion for future workshops.

Michael Eric Lambert also shies away from proposing a new architecture, arguing instead for embracing new forms (or limits) of sovereignty in the South Caucasus. The point, also made by the Abkhaz participant, is that whole populations thereby find themselves on the margins of titular countries' (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, but also Russia and Turkey) commitments to multilateral treaties, such as the 1948 Convention on Human Rights. As he eloquently put it; "we may deny their legal right to exist, but disease, hunger, misery and other human issues have no citizenship..."

Other papers hail the virtues of conditionality as a means to buttress relations and EU credibility. The West is fond of such mechanisms, but they provide little guarantees and predictability, as those principles have been so often violated in the past. Conditionality might be seen as a cover for the EU's lack of strategic credibility, and the new "Global Strategy" (2016) only highlights the EU's limited capabilities to meet global goals. The EU cannot unilaterally enforce its writ even in its immediate neighbourhoods. Without credible military capabilities, reliably usable within EU rules and procedures, it remains hopelessly regional, and conditions imposed on the periphery, unsupported by muscle, smack of duplicity.

No surprise then, that the EU is losing trust in the South Caucasus. Alexander Dubowy's paper not surprisingly speaks of a "regional actors' cacophony" and prefers not to risk a solution. Elkhan Nuriyev, reliable as ever, proposes a new regional dialogue platform to isolate South Caucasus issues from geopolitical shifts. This is a call he has repeatedly issued, and which we have also promoted in our Policy Recommendations. For Boris Kuznetsov, before even thinking about new stratagems and security architectures, actors on both sides of the geopolitical fence should do well to articulate precisely how they want to approach mutual expansionism. Although he doesn't say so out loud, Russia's exploration of soft power meth-



ods are probably what he means. Otherwise, there is evidence that Moscow's influence over the South Caucasus is far less significant than the more strident commentators (some of whom have been participants in earlier RSSC SG workshops) would have us believe. Indeed, many of the recent changes in the South Caucasus lend credence to this conclusion, and we will endeavour to explore this topic more deeply in the future.

For the Abkhaz participant, security is of a narrow focus, and pertains to national and individual development. Indeed, Abkhaz youth is forced into unwanted isolation through the interplay of geopolitics. The national aims are therefore limited, since geopolitical forays have not served Abkhaz interests well.

As valid as these observations are, they leave us on our appetite, with regards to the establishment of a new European security architecture. Over the last few months, we have been witness to radical change in the South Caucasus. That things may move abruptly is not surprising in a volatile region. But that expected reactions do not materialize, that is another matter. The Armenian "Velvet" revolution should have invited worried Russian opprobrium at the very least (if not worse), but the Kremlin's response was tepid at best. Azerbaijan should have been trusted to take advantage of the domestic disturbances to regain territories in Nagorno-Karabakh, but it has demonstrated remarkable self-restraint. Georgia as well has been the site of domestic upheaval, which, following the raids in night clubs and the botched investigation and prosecution of murdered youths, could have degenerated into revolution. Tellingly, this has led to the "peaceful" resignation of the prime minister in June 2018, and, uneventful as that change may look to the readers, it looks like Georgian politics is showing signs of democratic maturity.

Of course, the expected also happened; the Azeri and Russian elections re-installed the incumbents, and despite the relative predictability of the NATO Summit in Brussels and the largely controversial follow-on Trump-Putin meeting in Helsinki, there is a sense that it's not "business as usual" in the Euro-Atlantic area, including in the South Caucasus.

The co-chairs of the RSSC SG are following the direction provided by the Austrian National Defence Academy, and of the Directorate General for

Security Policy, which urges successive workshops to “narrow down” topics so that the RSSC SG can consider ever growing levels of topical complexity in the stabilization of the conflicts in the South Caucasus. Through that approach, we have discussed questions of soft power, alternative sovereignty, disarmament, occasionally touching on issues of non-use of force, internally displaced persons repatriation (IDPs), and regional institutionalisation (through energy security), and media freedom, etc. The recent upheavals in the South Caucasus invite a pause for reflection regarding how tectonic geopolitical changes are affecting the region.

More precisely, are we witnessing spontaneous regional changes, or are those upheavals symptoms of a larger movement? The next workshop in Reichenau will investigate these occurrences in an effort to define a common thread, or individual meaning. The conclusions may (or may not) suggest a re-direction of effort in future workshops, always in consultation with the Austrian National Defence Academy. As we complete the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the RSSC SG revival, we deem it only prudent to do so.

In closing, we would like to once again thank all who keep making the workshops possible, and also to salute Minsk, Belarus, as an outstandingly open and friendly venue for this workshop. It has been a privilege for us to host a conference in that lovely city and to witness first-hand how easy our Belarussian hosts have made our stay there. We furthermore extend our gratitude and great respect to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus for the diligence and professionalism it demonstrates in an official capacity in trying to mediate protracted conflicts in the South Caucasus, and in Ukraine.



**PART V:  
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**



# Policy Recommendations<sup>1</sup>

*Regional Stability in the South Caucasus Study Group*

## Executive Summary

The Regional Stability in the South Caucasus Study Group of the PFP Consortium (RSSC SG) convened its 17<sup>th</sup> workshop on “What A ‘New European Security Deal’ Could Mean for the South Caucasus” in Minsk, Belarus, on 18-21 April 2018. This workshop had two aims:

- 1) to lead the representatives of the South Caucasus to better consider the role of their region as a unified force to help shape security outcomes that matter to them;
- 2) to consider developing an outline for a new workable agreement over European security, based upon a review of the reasons for failure of past attempts, and an assessment of potential implications for the South Caucasus region.

The following recommendations were agreed by the workshop participants:

- 1) to strengthen the agencies and other bodies of the OSCE as a preferred vehicle for inter-state dialogue on European security issues;
- 2) to stem the “escalation of distrust”, stimulate confidence building and greater reliance on international institutions on the basis of comprehensive de-escalation mechanisms (which may include neutral peacekeeping missions);

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<sup>1</sup> These policy recommendations reflect the findings of the 17<sup>th</sup> RSSC Workshop “What a ‘New European Security Deal’ Could Mean for the South Caucasus”, held in Minsk (Belarus), 18-21 April 2018, compiled by Frederic Labarre and George Niculescu. Thanks to Veronika Fuchshuber and Raffaella Woller for their great help in managing the publication process and to Elkhon Nuriyev, Evgeny Pashentsev, and Sadi Sadiyev for their most appreciated input in the formulation of these Policy Recommendations.

- 3) to mitigate propaganda, demonization, and negative narratives, create a special group of the civil society in the South Caucasus to analyse attempts at vitiating international media communications; and
- 4) to create a dedicated group of experts on the post-Soviet region (“Eastern Table”) to discuss and seek solutions to ongoing conflicts, which would then be integrated into a wider pan-European security model. The “Eastern Table” should also have separate baskets, dealing with: regional economic issues; strengthening the “responsibility for conflict prevention”; transnational security threats to provide foresight and response capacity; confidence and security building measures (CSBMs).

## **Introduction**

The policy recommendations of the Regional Stability in the South Caucasus Study Group’s (RSSC SG) 12<sup>th</sup> workshop, held in Reichenau in November 2014, urged the international community to develop a new security architecture that would preserve the interests of great powers as well as the relative latitude of action of smaller actors in the South Caucasus. The increasing instability and unpredictability of international relations and the inconsistencies between the post-Cold War European security architecture and current realities have made those recommendations and the work of the RSSC SG more relevant and challenging than ever. The 17<sup>th</sup> RSSC SG workshop, convened for the first time ever in Minsk, Belarus, aimed to look at ways of peacefully transforming the Euro-Atlantic security order. Below is a synopsis of the discussions that took place 18-21 April 2018 in Minsk and the policy recommendations that were extracted from the break-out groups.

### **Panel 1**

The first panel was tasked with drawing a diagnosis of the current European strategic environment, as it affects the South Caucasus. The proposals that came forth surprised many by their originality.

The first panelist argued that in spite of inherent difficulties at the policy/diplomatic level, it is both sides' security instruments which should benefit from enhanced dialogue and interaction.

Namely, NATO and the CSTO should establish mechanisms to control military escalation, and avoid "war by mistake", thereby formalizing an inter-institutional security relationship. This prospect is being held back by the absence of a sense of common security within the CSTO, and by the evolving roles and postures of the respective alliances

The second panelist lamented the absence of evolution in security narratives, and the aggravation of regional tensions and unresolved conflicts not only in the South Caucasus, but more broadly in Europe. The South Caucasus, although not openly declared, remains at the forefront of large powers' strategic calculations. A change of narrative – not institutions or security mechanisms – is what is being proposed here. À propos of which, the third panelist surprised everyone by orienting his presentation on technological developments and security threats that put the fabric of society at risk. According to this panelist, there is not a clash of ideologies or of geo-strategic interests of great powers, but a clash of postures brought about by miscommunication. For him, as decision-makers became strategically more skillful and responsible than ever before, perspective technologies could have a great positive impact on future security issues. This panelist further argued that the essence of strategic communications consists of the synchronization of image, words and deeds (the latter being a crucial element in strategic communication). When there is mismatch of image, words and deeds, propagandists and targets find themselves compelled to manage perceptions, which distracts the public's and decision-makers' attention from technological revolutions which will affect the fabric of society. The tragedy being that adversaries will be defending socio-political systems and mechanisms that are increasingly obsolete.

The last panelist concluded the panel on a sour note; no new security architecture could be expected anytime soon due to mostly ideological/governance differences between Russia and the West. These are also most visible in the South Caucasus, where unresolved conflicts are undermining regional stability and security cooperation, including efforts to rebuild the security architecture in line with local actors' best interests. An-



thony Cordesman, from the Washington-based Center for Security and International Studies (CSIS) was quoted as saying that strong states will continue to bend the rules in their interests, meaning that eventually most local actors were persuaded that either only NATO or only Russia/CSTO could ensure their security.

## **Panel 2**

The first panelist argued that any NATO-CSTO dialogue, in a putative OSCE framework, would ensure that a new conception of European security takes all points of view into account, and would result in an inclusive architecture. This would of course soothe the disquiet of South Caucasus actors which would be involved actively in the creation of formal inter- and intra-institutional linkages.<sup>2</sup>

The second panelist took a Realist School perspective. The post-Cold War period, to him, was merely a historical bridge between bipolarity and a new global order. Currently, no one wants global leadership, not even the US, implying that the post-Cold War order was now over. This leads regional powers into an un-checked competition for regional hegemony. As a result, geography has become once again a bargaining chip in international relations. Might, not right, would thereby regulate security relations.

The third panelist conceded the point that Realist self-help was making a return, and that attempting to reform international law and juridical instruments might not be good enough, or even feasible, in some cases. The role of international law in making international relations predictable has always been exaggerated, according to this presenter. During the post-Cold War, too many grey areas have been allowed to mushroom, and there, rules cannot be enforced, so that the actors themselves have to be relied on to ensure predictability. This panelist concluded that weakening the OSCE

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<sup>2</sup> The co-chairs take this opportunity to underscore one of the objectives of the RSSC SG, which is to stimulate the sentiment and eventual creation of an inclusive South Caucasus strategic “community”. This goal would more readily be attained if the belligerents set aside their differences to compose a common strategic perspective to defend in unison the framework proposed hereby.

was a big mistake, and that it was far better to strengthen and more creatively apply the instruments that exist than to create new ones.

The fourth panelist dedicated his presentation to non-recognized states from the South Caucasus. International organizations, according to him, can provide them with administrative support necessary for the respect of important precepts of international law (such as human rights) without legitimizing any national claims. In such cases, NGOs, IOs and civil society would provide essential services. Allowing civil society and business to take their natural courses may carry the seeds of stabilization and conflict resolution.

The final panelist summarized the thinking prevalent the panel. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, strengthen the observance of international law.

In a context of sustained contradiction and confrontation, where self-help tends to supersede institutionalization, arms racing tends to supplant disarmament arrangements, and both recognized and un-recognized actors co-exist with mutual incertitude, the current European security regime does not meet the needs of any regional or global power. The solution would therefore seem to require: greater focus on inclusive organizations, preferably the OSCE, and on their fundamental commitments; enhanced economic cooperation as an incentive for re-building mutual trust; a review of EU enlargement's security impact.

### **Panel 3**

The first panelist of the last panel stressed on the growing role of non-Western regional actors (Russia, Turkey, Iran) in designing the South Caucasus security architecture. While it would be unreasonable to expect Russia to take a step back in the South Caucasus even with a commitment to non-enlargement by the EU or even NATO, it is obvious that European and Euro-Atlantic institutions are simply less active than Russia in the region. A "New European Security Deal" sounds to South Caucasus states like the West preparing to abandon the region. That would be damaging their current balancing policies against regional powers.

The second panelist came up with a practical solution, based on the fact that new conflict resolution mechanisms can stimulate a new security order where Russia does not feel her interests threatened, and where others find a voice. Thus, this panelist proposed convening a European Strategic Group, where Russia and the EU can exchange views on European security. He also argued for a form of “OSCE 2.0” which would revive the Helsinki Final Act’s forgotten instruments, featuring an “Eastern Table” for conflict resolution in Ukraine, Moldova, and the South Caucasus. Harmonizing relations between NATO and CSTO as well as EU and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) should also become “OSCE 2.0” priorities.

The third panelist reiterated that the current confrontation, especially between great powers, could not endure much longer before a conflagration engulfs all sides. The operations in Syria show the danger of escalation between protagonists. At the same time, great powers are the most effective actors in this crisis, which begs the question whether more decisive unilateral actions are to be foreseen in international and security affairs. A new hegemonic security structure for the South Caucasus could also include a triangular alliance between Moscow, Ankara and Tehran.

The fourth panelist was adamant that any new security architecture must include credible conflict resolutions mechanisms. Such mechanisms are urgently needed according to him, because waiting is not an option (ergo the suggestion we made at the 13th RSSC SG workshop in Kyiv about “strategic patience” would seem inoperative), because youth is more radical than the elders. At the very least, a policy of “engagement without recognition” (à la Peter Semneby) would be well received, provided there is engagement.

The final panelist of the conference reminded us that there was no military solution for the conflict in Transnistria currently on the table. The conflict settlement is frozen, since there are no talks about status, but only about socio-economic and humanitarian issues. Although no one wanted to see a resumption of open hostilities, there was a manifest military buildup taking place since at least 2014. In this context, a military de-escalation process was suggested, possibly including a civilian CSDP-CSTO peace-building mission.

Following those discussions, Peter Schulze delivered a key note address to inspire breakout group discussions. He made several suggestions; first, he argued, we must recognize that all the elements of a peaceful international order were already codified in the Paris Charter of 1990. Yet, during the decade of the 1990s, Russia barely influenced international political developments. It took Russia's own efforts at re-establishing herself as a force to be reckoned with in the middle of the 2000s for her to be taken seriously, but at the same time affecting the feeling of security that prevailed between the West and Russia. Only now has the US abandoned the idea of unipolarity, and while the status quo seems the best option, multipolarity carries the seeds of disarmament if particular dialogue mechanisms are revived, such as the NATO-Russia Council and the Normandy framework. He said "we need to challenge the post-Cold War international order, but with new and inclusive institutions."

Subsequently, two interactive discussion sessions and two breakout groups yielded rich exchanges leading to policy recommendations presented below.

### **Breakout Group Discussions**

The breakout group discussions emphasized the need for greater civil society interaction and track 2 (non-official) diplomacy. The latter should focus on problems of conflict resolution, radical extremism, uncontrolled migration and other similar topics of common interest.

A structured dialogue – a dedicated diplomatic platform – should be erected to urge country leaders to look at projects for the common benefit.

This must have emotional appeal so that they can easily be sold to the respective publics.

Much reform of existing international institutions needs to take place to fully be inclusive and operational. In this view, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter could be updated.

The groups concluded that Russia and the West could minimize the negative impact of their current geopolitical confrontation if they focused on economic integration, conflict resolution, as well as on addressing new se-

curity risks, such as the problem of terrorism, religious extremism and radicalism. Root causes of extremism must be addressed especially in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. This, as well as initiating some form of dialogue on countering hybrid threats, could be ground for renewed security dialogue and cooperation in the OSCE format as well. Making significant progress in Donbas conflict resolution and starting talks on resuming confidence and security building measures in Europe should be higher priorities.

Finally, the groups reconciled themselves to the notion that, for the foreseeable future, joint problem solving would coexist with inter-state competition. While a new European security model could be developed at a later stage, there is a need to switch off from the current all-out confrontation to developing common security issues definitions pertaining to regional responsibility, assessing the scope of burden sharing for security, and reviewing the overall framework for European security dialogue. In particular, there needs to be a much better correlation between the concepts of territorial integrity and self-determination.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Upon the conclusion of discussions, the co-chairs asked the assembled participants to give their broad approval to the formulation of the following policy recommendations:

- 1) In general, the OSCE should be the preferred vehicle for inter-state dialogue and some of her agencies and institutions should be strengthened for better use.
- 2) In general, there should be comprehensive de-escalation mechanisms put in place (which may include neutral peacekeeping missions) to stimulate confidence building and greater reliance on international institutions. The objective is to stem the “escalation of distrust”. This might offer an opportunity to address most pressing problems with the mutual exchange of information and the establishment of joint contact groups by different security organizations dealing with vital issues on the European agenda. Coordination could then be achieved *inter alia* upon agreements on mutual deci-

sion-making mechanisms. An example could be the conduct of peacekeeping/civilian monitoring missions using the resources and infrastructure of the OSCE, CSTO, and the EU.

- 3) Civil society in the South Caucasus should create a special group to analyse attempts at vitiating international media communications. The aim would be to mitigate propaganda, demonization, and negative narratives.
- 4) Along the line of point 3 above, a dedicated group of experts on the post-Soviet region (“Eastern Table”) should be created to discuss and seek solutions on South Caucasus conflicts, which would then be integrated into a wider pan-European security model. This Eastern Table should have separate baskets, dealing inter alia with regional economic issues, stimulating a “responsibility for conflict prevention” perhaps within a neutral peacekeeping framework, also a basket on transnational security threats to provide a conflict foresight and response capacity, and in general, a special focus on confidence and security building measures (CSBMs).



## List of Abbreviations

AA	Association Agreement
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BRICS-states	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CESD	Centre for Economic and Social Development
CFE	Conventional Forces in Europe
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSBM	Confidence and Security-Building Measures
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSIS	Center for Security and International Studies
CSTO	Common Security Treaty Organization
DCB	Defence capacity building
DCFTA	Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
DOC/RI	Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
ECFR	European Council on Foreign Relations
EEC	European Economic Community
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EPNK	European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh
ER PSC	EU-Russia Political and Security Committee
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
EUBAM	EU Border Assistance Mission
EU-ISS	European Union Institute for Security Studies
EUMM	European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia
FSC	Forum for Security Cooperation



G7	Group of Seven (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States)
G20	Group of Twenty (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, European Union)
GDP	Gross domestic product
GID	Geneva International Discussions
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDIS	Institute for Development and Social Initiatives, Chisinau
IDP	Internally displaced person
INSEAD	Institut Européen d'Administration des Affaires
IO	International organisation
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISP	Institute for Security Policy
Ltd	Limited company
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIC	National Intelligence Council
NK	Nagorno-Karabakh
NRC	NATO-Russia Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OGRF	Operational Group of Russian Forces
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OTAN	see NATO
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
PET	Punctuated Equilibrium Theory
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PJSC	Public joint stock company
PJSOC	Public joint stock oil company

RAND	Research and Development Corporation
RBC	RosBusinessConsulting
RSSC SG	“Regional Stability in the South Caucasus” Study Group
SC	Strategic Communication
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SD	Structured Dialogue
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SGI	Study Group Information
SPW	Strategic psychological warfare
TNC	Transportation network company
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN GGE	United Nations Group of Governmental Experts
UNO	United Nations Organization
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USD	United States dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VD11	Vienna Document 2011
WEU	Western European Union
WMD	Weapon of mass destruction
WW3	World War III



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The South Caucasus, as a bridge between Russia and Europe, needs to cooperatively define its role in the East-West relations and security environment. Therefore, in the 17<sup>th</sup> Regional Stability in the South Caucasus Study Group (RSSC SG) Workshop experts from the region and beyond strategically and geo-politically examined possibilities of an agreement which could shape and regulate the future Euro-Atlantic security environment.

In this framework, the current SGI publication focusses on overcoming differences in Russian and Western vision of changes within the European security environment and discusses ways of bridging existing gaps. Moreover, members of the RSSC Study Group proposed effective tools of regional integration and conflict resolution.

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