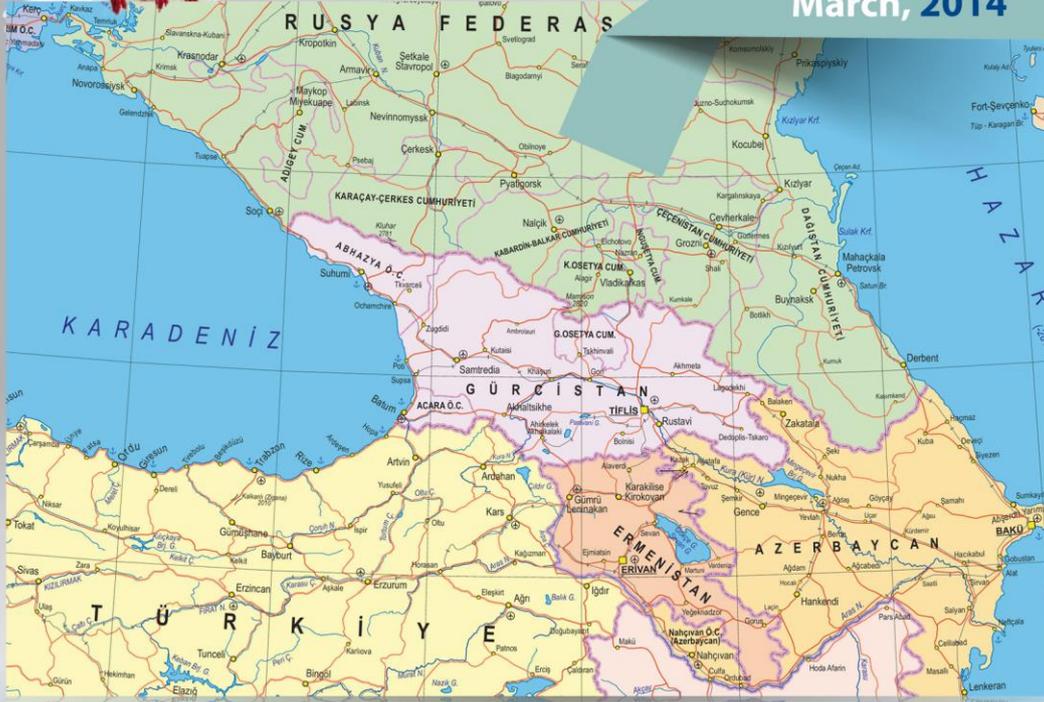


GÜNEY KAFKASYA'DA BÖLGESEL İSTİKRAR ÇALIŞTAYI

REGIONAL STABILITY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS WORKSHOP

20-22 Mart
March, 2014



TASAM
TÜRK ASYA STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
TURKISH ASIAN CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

**GÜNEY KAFKASYA'DA
BÖLGESEL İSTİKRAR
ÇALIŞTAYI**

**REGIONAL STABILITY
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS
WORKSHOP**

(STRATEGIC VISION DOCUMENT)

REGIONAL STABILITY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS WORKSHOP

**“From Self-Defence to Regional Disarmament:
Reducing Tensions and Stabilising the South Caucasus”**

(20-22 March 2014, Istanbul)

PURPOSE

In 2012, the Austrian Ministry of Defence and Sports, through its National Defence Academy and the Directorate General for Security Policy, initiated a resume of the scientific work done by the PfP Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes in the South Caucasus. This initiative built upon a Study Group which began already in 2001 but was discontinued to internal strife in the region in 2005.

Three workshops in Reichenau, Austria from 9 to 11 November 2012, in Tbilisi from 13 to 15 March 2013 and most recently in Reichenau, Austria from 7 to 9 November 2013 achieved success in that they demonstrated that the Study Group had established a broad academic basis to achieve cohesion rapidly. The 9th workshop of the Study Group will be the opportunity for experts to present and develop ideas on stability through demilitarization and de-escalation, and present them to regional stakeholders for their consideration.

Security in the South Caucasus is multi-faceted and tensions fluctuate according to whether regional actors feel at risk of imminent political violence. Although there is a cultural motive behind the need to take up arms and substitute self-defence to the protection that a political authority may provide, the act of self-defence and community defence does serve a purpose which has consequences in the wider region. When individuals in a locality are unsure whether the security services can offer them security, they tend to take the initiative, and provide for self- and community defence. This may create additional frictions, misunderstandings, not to mention shifts in the local balance of power, which are often interpreted as a challenge to central authority. Other communities may be so suspicious of the central authorities that they may enlist the support of third actors for protection. Here, the protection role becomes confused – or synonymous – with occupation. A complex multi-level security dilemma therefore ensues.

This security dilemma is at the root of the incapacity of conflict parties in the South Caucasus to come to an agreement on the non-use of force. This disagreement runs deep; when pressed to make an unequivocal statement about the non-use of force during the 8th Regional Stability in the South Caucasus workshop, participants were tentative in their response. A security dilemma in conditions of overt hostility and military symmetry is difficult to resolve at the best of times, but in the South Caucasus, the command over means of coercion becomes confused with issues of jurisdiction over the security services, territorial control, and basic security at the individual and community level.

Promises on the non-use of force can easily be broken; witness the oft-violated cease-fires of the Balkan wars, owing to insubordinate militias and uneven control of the military. The South Caucasus is no different; the guarantees of fulfillment of an agreement on the non-use of force would be difficult to police and the actions of agents provocateurs difficult to prevent. De-militarization and de-escalation aims at removing the means of coercion from these agents, as well as establishing tangible achievements on the way to reduce local tensions. It also theoretically provides the main actors in the region more room to manoeuvre in their national budgets, and offers the opportunity to re-balance public spending in favour of more social services, without which governments are exposing themselves to public discontent.

However, operating a strategic shift of that nature is risky; the move from offense to defence in conditions of strategic symmetry is always dangerous, as one party may try to seize on the temporary imbalance to gain a decisive advantage over a rival. At the community level, breakaway regions may fear relinquishing their respective arsenals, as the control over the means of violence is the Weberian guarantee of political independence. At the individual level, the possession of a firearm is often a birthright, making difficult to accept any social contract where security is provided by a higher level of governance. Focusing on demilitarization and de-escalation has several advantages over the hitherto sterile discussions on the non-use of force. First, it is easier to incentivize. Second, it brings to the fore more basic conceptions of national security. Third, it by-passes the conditions that have been raised by conflicting parties in the Minsk Group and Geneva negotiations. Fourth, the issue of non-violence has been a constant variable in nearly all presentations made in the 8th RSCC SG.

This is why it is propitious to convene the upcoming 9th workshop of the Study Group entitled "From Self-Defence to Regional Disarmament: Reducing Tensions and Stabilising the South Caucasus" in **Istanbul, Turkey** from **20-22 March 2014**.

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PARTNERS

The partners to this project are:

- **Austrian National Defence Academy** | Vienna-Austria
- **Directorate General for Security Policy, Austrian Ministry of Defence and Sports** | Vienna-Austria
- **PfP Consortium Study Group** “Regional Stability in the South Caucasus”, www.pfpconsortium.org
- **TASAM Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies** | Istanbul-Turkey | www.tasam.org

TOPIC OUTLINE

Force cannot be used if the means to coerce are absent or mitigated. Albeit an idealistic truism, disarmament and de-escalation are nevertheless real conditions for progress to be made on the way to stability in the South Caucasus. Successful demilitarization at the regional level can also have positive consequences at wider levels, notably in the relationship between the Euro-Atlantic powers and Russia.

These observations have been repeated often enough in theory and in practice. But demilitarization in the South Caucasus reveals how multi-faceted this aspect of security really is. Underpinning any discussion on this topic has to account for the “democratization” of weaponry in the region, where individuals and families take it as a point of honour to be able to defend their property, let alone their community. When communities are protected by extra-legal groups, the uncertainty that is created spills-over from the local to the regional and thence to the international levels. It contributes to a climate of insecurity which finds relief only in the greater accumulation of arsenals at the local, regional and State levels. One of the objectives of this workshop is not so much disarmament at the local or individual level as finding out the conditions that could make a social contract where individuals relinquish the right to self-defence in the hands of a superior and legitimate authority.

There is also the question that such a climate tends to preoccupy decision-makers in the South Caucasus, and distract them from the more pressing needs facing their constituents. For example, in the conflict opposing Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, the arms race that has been going on there for the last several years has prevented Azerbaijan from - among several other things - diversifying its economy.

Natural resources are expected to start dwindling in Azerbaijan by the middle of this decade, and therefore the current rhythm of military procurement – if it does serve a security purpose – will have to be reduced. Armenia has tried to follow suit, in the process aggravating the poverty rate in the country. According to the UN, 30 per cent of the Armenian population lives on the poverty line or below. Meanwhile, Nagorno-Karabakh has developed autonomous forces which crystallize the notion that it is a *de facto* independent State, lacking only recognition.

Since 2011, a virtual “sniper war” has spread the sides apart further, and together with the increase in arsenals, has contributed to a generalised feeling that by pre-emption or misunderstanding, hostilities could re-ignite, sabotaging the meagre headway made under the Minsk Group’s leadership, namely, in the shape of the Madrid Principles. The imminence of war is made palpable primarily by the presence of large forces in being along the contact line, and the presumption of even greater arsenals being amassed for the purpose of pushing for a military decision over Nagorno-Karabakh. Having sworn to spend as much if not more on defence than Armenia’s total government budget, this fear is usually attributable to Azerbaijan. But Armenian officials have been quoted as saying that the Armenian defence budget is larger than it has ever been at any time in the last 20 years.

Preventing a pre-emptive or accidental war requires examining the incentives for all parties that could lead to a radical disarmament at the regional level. Disarmament may have many meanings in this case; it may mean withdrawal from the contact line, adaptation of the 1994 cease-fire agreement to include sniper action, removal, mothballing or de-activation of units, or prohibition of certain types of weapons. Movement in the direction of disarmament would avoid the circular and hitherto fruitless discussions about the non-use of force, which cannot be effectively guaranteed.

In the situation opposing Georgia and its two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Russian military presence adds an extra dimension to the problem. For one, Russian troops are stationed on sovereign territory – no matter which territory one speaks of; Georgian, Abkhazian or South Ossetian. The first advantage of demilitarization in this region of the South Caucasus would be to have the Russian forces look more like a bona fide peacekeeping contingent. In terms of public perception, this would greatly benefit Russia’s public image. But since disarmament is a reciprocal business, Georgia’s efforts would go a long way in demonstrating to its breakaway regions that it has no plans to attempt to reintegrate them by force. In essence, the non-use of force issue is null and void, since the means to apply force are reduced.

At the same time, demilitarization does not mean that the option for full independence of the breakaway regions is null and void. That decision is not for the workshop to determine, although the RSSC Study Group insists that such an outcome would be legitimate only if mutually agreed to. The privilege of maintaining security forces is not always exclusive to the central authorities of a country. This is a function that can be allocated at the regional level. Demilitarization here looks at the level of structural sufficiency (in materiel and numbers) to ensure security in the breakaway regions.

The point is that demilitarization is a starting point for confidence building between the conflicting parties in the South Caucasus. If one perceives the tensions at the regional level as a manifestation of the current malaise between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic powers, then we could argue that disarmament by proxy at the regional level could have positive outcomes for that geo-strategic relationship as well. In particular, it could bode well for the re-establishment of existing arms control regimes, such as the stalled Conventional Forces in Europe treaty. Although the technical aspects of such arrangements are not the subject of this workshop, it is nevertheless useful to bear some of them in mind, especially when they accentuate the prospect of mutual confidence building (such as verification missions, for example).

Disarmament and de-escalation are wide subjects; participants are encouraged to examine them with a fresh mind, and explore all the possible definitions of these concepts. Perhaps it is appropriate to look at the topic from the opposite view; looking at demilitarization, for example from the point of view of the effects of militarization. Is the local arms race between Armenia and Azerbaijan driven by revanchism, misperception, aimed at forcing the adversary to make difficult spending choices, or simply an attempt at overall balancing (Azerbaijan matching Armenia *and* Russia's potential, for instance)?

As always, participants should look for constructive and workable ways to achieve demilitarization. They may be inspired by international documents such as NATO's Art. 2, Flank limitations of the (inactive) CFE Treaty, or the key Madrid Principles, but they should also look at the operating conditions for disarmament, such as transparency, prevention, and some degree of mutual confidence.

The objective is to raise awareness of the effects of disproportionate spending on defence and military procurement on the health of the economy, domestic stability and on the risks of open conflict. The policy recommendations could be as much a guide for mediators as a face-saving document for the regional leaders looking for the right arguments.

ANAHTAR SORULAR

- What are the effects of militarization? On the individual, or the community? Are they good, or bad?
- How to re-establish a workable balance that unites sufficiency with effective deterrence?
- What is the intent of the arms race between Armenia and Azerbaijan?
- Can Azerbaijan force a decisive outcome with the use of force over Nagorno-Karabakh?
What consequences for the Aliyev regime if it fails?
- Is Armenia's military expenditure sustainable?
- How can Russia be convinced to re-visit the CFE Treaty (or at least convinced to consider a new, separate treaty on flank force structures) ?
- Can the Madrid Principles be revived if only the topic of demilitarization is considered and remains de-linked from other issues?
- How can the respective authorities (at various levels) in the South Caucasus maintain effective control over extra-legal security forces?

PANEL 1

“Individual Self-Defence and the State: Establishing Trust towards an Effective Social Contract”

Thomas Hobbes, writing in the wake of the English Civil War, argued that the individual's right to self-defence should be pooled in the hands of the sovereign, so that individuals do not represent a source of insecurity for one another. Given the attachment to weapons in the South Caucasus, as well as the chaos of the post-Soviet era, this panel will look into the legal, social and cultural conditions to enable relations of trust between governments (at all levels and regardless of political status) and constituents, and among constituents themselves. This panel should look into ways of controlling or limiting armaments at the individual and local level. The pertinence of this topic is made manifest by the confusion between criminal and political violence in the context of a frozen ethnic conflict, and in the context of partially- or unrecognized political communities.

PANEL 2

“Security in the Break-away Regions: How much of a Monopoly on the Use of Force?”

Sociologist Max Weber defined the State as the sole repository of the legitimate means of coercion. By definition, a community's coercion potential determines – in some minds – the attainment of statehood. Yet, as we can see from many other examples, the State's ability to coerce is sometimes not centrally-administered. Security is a function that is shared across different levels of government, from the State to the region, to the municipality. This panel will look at the breakaway regions' security services and look for a measure of “sufficiency” in the provision of security within the breakaway regions. It will also be useful to look at the interaction between the services of the region and that of the centre in a spirit of cooperation across the political divide, and as an example of a “federated” capacity – regardless of the issue of political status or achievement of territorial integrity. Indeed, security is an expensive luxury, and one that some breakaway regions will not always want to depend on other actors for. It may make sense to divide this function between the centre and the regions to avoid duplications and save costs. In the end, part of the solution to the issue of exclusiveness of the means of coercion is determining how much security is enough, and for what purposes. This panel should be the occasion for the breakaway regions to bring clarification to the issue.

PANEL 3

“Security Competition among the South Caucasus States: Racing towards Disaster?”

In the last five years, the security situation between the South Caucasus powers has become more fragile. The relationship between Russia and Georgia are better now, but only after the latter attempted to forcibly reintegrate its breakaway regions. Before doing so, Georgia had indulged in a military spending spree aimed at matching Russia's local military capacity. It seems that Armenia and Azerbaijan are also arms racing, and the last couple of years have seen an increase in clashes at the line of contact. This panel will investigate the prospects and consequences of a Georgia-Russia scenario in the case of Armenia-Azerbaijan. Here, the experience of Georgia is critical, and a discussion over the consequences of disproportionate military spending is in order. The consequences were not only clear for the fate of the Georgian leadership, but also for the society as well. This panel should look at the domestic consequences of engaging in an arms race while neglecting other social spending on which domestic stability depends.

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PANEL 4

“The South Caucasus as Nexus of Large Powers’ Security Dilemma”

Given the EU’s soft power, NATO’s relative withdrawal from the region, can we really say that the conflicts in the South Caucasus are a reflection of large powers’ security dilemmas or regional ambitions? This panel will seek to propose ways to regionally disarm so as to limit any competition between large powers to the economic and political domain. Further to the point, it would be appropriate to investigate the matter under the purview of the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty which is now stalled. The conditions that would enable the major powers (Russia, Euro-Atlantic countries) to revisit the CFE at least at the regional level (according to Flank limitations, for example) could be a worthy avenue to pursue. This panel should seek clarity as to whether it is the great powers’ relationship which shapes the South Caucasus security environment, or whether it is the disputes within the South Caucasus which colour the relationship of the great powers.