



The Security of the South Caucasus Countries and NATO opinions and comments

Electronic bulletin

#2

Internet conferance



NATO and the Security of the South Caucasus Countries

Participants:



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Alexander Skakov (Russia)

- senior researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, an expert of the Russian Institute for Strategic Research



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Laura Baghdasaryan

- Conference facilitator, Director of Region Research Center.

Internet conference

NATO and the Security of the South Caucasus Countries

This is the title of the Internet conference that was held in Caucasus Journalists Net (www.caucasusjournalists.net) on March 20 - 22, 2012. The discussion that involved experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia and Turkey was made possible with the support of the Public Diplomacy Division of NATO within the framework of the project bearing the same title as the conference and implemented by Region Research Center (Armenia).

The following experts took part in the conference:



Sergey Sargsyan (Armenia)

- Deputy Director of the Center for Political Studies, "Noravank" Foundation, Armenia, LTC (ret.)



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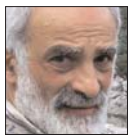
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Excerpts from the conference materials are presented below.

You can familiarize yourselves with the full text in Caucasus Journalists Net (See: <http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/forumdump.asp?idforumtheme=93>)

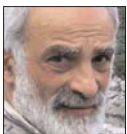
The views expressed by the experts in the discussions are personal and do not reflect NATO's official position.

Discussion topic: The Military, Political and Strategic Priorities of NATO on the Eve of the Chicago Summit (May 2012)



Sergey Sargsyan - As it is expected, the main issues to be discussed at the Chicago summit will be as follows: the prospects of the withdrawal of the Coalition troops from Afghanistan, the response of the Alliance to new calls for security and strengthening cooperation with partners. In the context of these issues the concept of the so-called "smart defense" will be considered the implementation of which is closely related to reforming the funding system and the identification of the priorities and the configuration of participants in this or that long-term project.

Besides the solutions to the purely financial issues, this initiative must make the Alliance more flexible both in terms of the organization of its current activities, and in planning and implementing military and political operations in the future. I assume that this operation was a direct consequence of the analysis of the operation in Libya. It was the operation in Libya that revealed the necessity for the urgent creation of a flexible "coalition for an hour" - a number of NATO members who were interested in conducting an operation distribute their troops and responsibilities upon consent and in the condition of complete non-interference all the other members of the Alliance. It is true that they bear the total responsibility, just by themselves. By the way, the CSTO has assumed the same strategy.



George Tarkhan-Mouravi -Really the withdrawal of the troops from Afghanistan will be a very important task in the future, even though NATO is not a key player there, but rather a symbolic one. However, to adapt to the new and unexpected challenges (Syria, Iran, probably Pakistan, Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the troops, the rapid arming of China...), I think, is a most important task.

As for the new challenges, there are, of course, important new topics, the aggressive actions in the cyberspace, the space, the uncontrollable expansion of the nuclear states club against the relative decrease of the risk of a global nuclear confrontation, the strategic unpredictability of Russia and China, the right to humanitarian intervention, de-legitimization of the UN, to name a few.



Sergey Sargsyan - I would add terrorism to the new challenges, mentioned by George Tarkhan-Mouravi, which has (sequentially) come to replace nuclear proliferation to a more topical type of proliferation - that of ballistic missile technologies.

Correspondingly, the challenges which are as follows should be appropriately addressed: the creation of so-called cyber-armies, the European missile defense, and the continuation of the active fight against international terror.



George Tarkhan-Mouravi - I do not quite agree with Sergey in terms of the prioritization of terrorism as a number one issue for NATO, even though without doubt, it is a huge problem. A lot less is done in this direction within the NATO framework, than independently by the members of the Alliance. Neither do I quite agree with regard to the missiles - it is not accidental that the main discourse on nuclear arms rests with North Korea and Iran, even though the means of their delivery are also important. In my opinion, the nuclear arms without missiles are more dangerous than the missiles without nuclear armaments.



Sergey Sargsyan - To George Tarkhan-Mouravi

As for terrorism, in the Emerging Security Challenges section of the annual report of the General Secretary of NATO for 2011 there are three such challenges: cyber-attacks, ballistic missiles and terrorism. I share this approach: firstly, the creation of the nuclear weapon is an extremely complicated activity, secondly, even with regard to Iran the opinions on their nuclear ambitions are far from being absolute (the intelligence services of the USA consider that currently the armament program is frozen), thirdly, it is necessary to have higher motivation with regard to the use of the nuclear weapon, not the missile, and fourthly, they can completely be equipped by chemical, bacteriological military loads, which by the way are much easier available (not in the least, after the operations in Iraq and Libya) and so on.



Dimitrios Triantaphyllou - Questions related to the future of the Alliance

What will be the main focus of NATO in the next years? What will NATO look like in the future? Will there be an East-West crisis? Will NATO fall back on its own/old *raison d'être*? If there is no East-West crisis or if it is not going to be critical then we have a problem of NATO. On the other hand, the periphery is not only the Mediterranean but also the East. In 2011 NATO has been used as a tool box. The French, British and Americans in particular have used NATO as a toolbox. Is this going to be the role of NATO in the future? Or will it serve as an instrument for having agreement between the Americans and the Europeans? Will it be a platform where the US and Europeans meet to discuss future policy issues? It has not served in this manner in the past. If it will act as such, we need to ask what is the role of NATO in the relations between the Europeans and the US? This will also depend on the future of US foreign policy. What is the role of NATO in US foreign policy? Will there be a crisis as Americans may be less and less interested in NATO? The perception that Turkey is going through a sort of "Easternization" process is also an issue. Turkey is not seen as part of the West. It is possible to imagine an operation without Turkey but it is inconvenient but possible. Turkey has always been very different than the West of NATO. Its difference is a reality. Its bilateral relationship (especially to the US) has been more important. Multilateralism has always been seen as important in the alliance. What are we going to have in the Southern Neighborhood tomorrow? Both the NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Initiative had limited importance. The Alliance's collective identity (with the region) has been relatively low. Trying to promote the collective Western identity in the Middle East and North Africa might be risky.

Are we going towards a confirmation of the exceptionality of the Southern Flank or are we going to ask/fight for a more integrated European/NATO involvement in the Mediterranean? Are we isolating the Southern Flank from Western Europe? Will Turkey and Italy be the only European countries that retain US tactical nuclear weapons? Why should the US maintain tactical weapons in Germany? It is expensive. How about anti-ballistic missile defense? It is also another element of distinction between the Southern Flank and the West. So we should ask: What is happening in the Southern flank of NATO? How is NATO responding? Is it increasing its isolation or is it increasing its integration? The debate about the Southern Flank has direct implications regarding the role of NATO in its Eastern Neighbourhood and the security of the countries of the Southern Caucasus. This in part is due to the relationship between Russia and NATO, Russia and the US, and to some extent, the relationship between Russia and Turkey. My point is that there are a number of improbables on all fronts that need to be assessed and discussed before defining the formulation a policy for NATO in the Caucasus and elsewhere.



Arastun Orujlu - I think that George is right, saying that the new situation in North Africa will considerably decrease the risks of terrorism, but the authoritarian regimes present in these countries have not been the only sources to have given rise to terrorism. Other sources of terror are still topical to this time. From this perspective the new Pro-Islamist forces in the North African countries will first of all carefully handle the cooperation with NATO, and secondly, the unresolved state of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict will always remain a source for tension and terrorism in the Near East region and North Africa.



Sergey Sargsyn - I hold just the opposite perspective. Right now Bin Laden's project of "fighting with the closest enemy" - to remove the incumbent power (the one that can already be regarded as having acted in the past in many aspects) in the Near East/Africa is being implemented. I am afraid international terrorism may receive a percentage of the Libyan oil. However, this is a question that one may easily answer with "We will see in the future."



Arastun Orujlu - The questions (posed by D. Triantaphyllou -editor's comment) are quite broad and fundamental. I will try to answer them. As for NATO's future, it is difficult to say anything since this future depends on the layout established within the Alliance. This layout may be determined by a number of factors:

1. The dynamics of the US influence on NATO,
2. The situation in the post-crisis European Union,
3. The directions of foreign policy development in Middle East (China, or the West?),
4. The political and economic situation in Russia.

Let me begin by saying that we will not manage to eliminate NATO as a foreign policy instrument in the near future. As long as there are regimes like the ones in Syria or Iran that threaten international security, there will also be a motivation to use NATO not to allow for instabilities. And whether these decisions will be made collectively or will result from the will of 2 - 3 states, will

depend on the economic situation in the NATO member-states. Turkey is turning to the East, and we may agree with this choice, even though things do not look very convincing so far. Yes, huge Arabic investments are made into the Turkish economy, however, Turkish economy is linked to the West not only in financial terms, but also technology-wise. This means that the Turkish game for balancing between the West and the East will continue. The East-West conflict is probable to a certain degree, but in the given case it would be better to consider China with its expanding economy as the East. This economy will undoubtedly lead to and has already led to an increase in China's attention to the regions that are rich in energy resources. On the whole, I think that if the issue with the sources of alternative energy is solved, the problem of disproportion between decreasing mining and increasing demand will be one of the main factors for new conflicts. In this sense Russia will not manage to stand aside and watch the conflict between West and China. And the weakness and the inefficiency of the Russian management system, and the almost impossibility for political and economic reforms will not let Russia become a geopolitical player in the broad sense of the word, even though I do not think that Russia will remain completely overboard. So, this geopolitical clew with many unknowns will make NATO review its system of collective management, in order to perfect the decision-making mechanisms and to change structural bureaucracy.



Laura Baghdasaryan - A weird statement of a question, isn't it? Don't you think that the very statement of the question on the use of possibilities and the capacities of NATO as an instrument for the solution of the security issues of member states and global security with some negative subtext looks a bit strange. If NATO's number one priority is to overcome the threats to security first of all of its member states in any part of the world (as it is stipulated in the New Strategy, adopted in 2010), the use of NATO as an instrument by these very members will be normal. The determination of the level of the threat and the consensus with regard to these issues is a different matter. The ongoing discussions over the operation in Libya within the analysis of its so-called "solid residual" are important not only from the perspective of using NATO as an instrument by an individual or a couple of countries, but with regard to the propriety of these operations from the perspective of international norms and the proportionality of the undertaken military measure to the reality. Even though the representatives of NATO themselves do not like the term "a NATO responsibility zone" beyond the borders of their member-states, we cannot deny the need for such a notion and term at least because challenges may come forth in one region today, tomorrow they may emerge in another area. I would like to suggest that we should look at the issue of the "lessons learnt from the operations of 2011" from this perspective and it will be interesting to learn what your vision of the problems with regard to the expansion of the zone of NATO's responsibility as a security system is.



Sergey Sargsyan - Even before the operations in Libya, many experts forecasted that Afghanistan is the last state outside Europe in the territory of which NATO would operate... However, as we can assume in the future too its potential will be used far beyond the geographical borders of member-states. The

expansion of the zone of the interests of NATO will take place at the expense of both the admission of new members into the Organization, and the expansion of the list of threats to security which in the conditions of globalization may become more and more cross-border and/or geographically spread out. A very vivid example of this is cyber-threat. By the way, it has not yet become completely clear so far how NATO (and by the way any other state or international military and political organization) will react to it.



Alexander Skakov- Dear colleagues! When we speak of NATO, I have a feeling that we are speaking of the CSTO, the Warsaw pact or something of the kind. Are we talking about the operations of NATO in the course of the previous year? Really? And I thought that in Afghanistan and Iraq we were dealing with the operations of the US with the support of the individual members of NATO. And the same seemed true also for Libya... And please, show me the "NATO responsibility zone." Where does it start and where does it end? Libya seems to be within that zone. And Abkhazia and South Ossetia do not seem to be there. Is the zone of responsibility defined by the potential of potential adversaries?

Discussion topic: Topical Issues of the Security of the South Caucasus and NATO



Sergey Sargsyan - When in 1994 NATO launched the program of Partnership for Peace, all the three states in South Caucasus joined it in an order that was based on the character of their future cooperation with NATO: Georgia first, then Azerbaijan and finally Armenia.

The program stipulates that every partner state may determine the level and the scale of partnership. At that period, I assume, every country in the region used to act - also and not in the least - watching the reaction of the neighbor. If the neighbor joins an international organization, you should calculate what will meet your own interests - to follow the neighbor's example or to refrain.

Currently Armenia is actively cooperating in all the spheres of NATO partnership - last November the third Action Plan on the individual cooperation between Armenia and NATO which is the basis of partner relations was ratified. Reforms in the spheres of defense, security and emergency are being implemented with NATO's support. A constant dialogue with NATO "is a good opportunity to share with our NATO partners our perception of the threats to security and challenges that have emerged before South Caucasus and our vision of overcoming them",- the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan. In the summer of 2011 the contingent of Armenian military servicemen was increased three times within the international forces to support security in Afghanistan. There is a continuous discussion on the development of the situation around the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and so on.

On the whole we can state that such cooperation is implemented on the mutually beneficial basis and that is why it is taking place.



Arastun Orujlu - Unlike the previous years, when Azerbaijan was obviously imitating cooperation with NATO, today we can already clearly see the outlines of the inclination toward deepening this cooperation. The above-mentioned can be proved by the recent statement made by Ilham Aliyev that the relations with NATO are a priority in the foreign policy of Azerbaijan. He made this announcement in Brussels. I think that this is already a decision that has been conceived due to a number of factors, but especially due to the so-called balanced foreign policy of Aliyev which is doomed to failure. Now Azerbaijan does not have any other choice, but approximation with NATO and the European Union. A number of other factors have also influenced this decision, including the Iranian crisis, Russia's attempts to attain its objectives in the region through a permanently harsh pressure on Azerbaijan. As for the Karabakh conflict, they understand it very well in Baku that if Putin is able to get a firm grasp, so at least for the upcoming 6 years they should not expect any changes for the better.



Alexander Skakov- As for the expansion, any expansion has its limits. When they forget about his, we witness a situation similar to what is currently happening within the European Union. The Organization was unable to digest the new members. And can you imagine what would have happened if Turkey was admitted to EU? And for example, Ukraine, too? The same may happen to NATO, too. I have no doubts that Turkey has its own interests, at least with regard to the perimeter of the borders. And they do not coincide with the interests of Spain, for example. How and why will Spain support the interests of Turkey, for example, in the Iraqi Kurdistan? So it will end up turning into a CSTO. What are the common interests of Armenia and Kirgizstan?

... Let us imagine something incredible - the admission of Armenia and Azerbaijan into NATO. It is clear that if there is an opportunity for admission into NATO, it should be granted to all the three countries in South Caucasus at the same time. Can we think of any possible harmonization of the interests of Armenia and Azerbaijan within the Alliance?

...It is not always possible to draw a demarcation line between cooperation and admission. Surely, I wish the cooperation along different lines would lead to the harmonization of relations within the region and even beyond. By the way, I do not quite understand how membership to CSTO can ensure the security of Armenia. The treaty between Armenia and the Russian Federation is a different issue. But this is not directly linked to the CSTO.



Sergey Sargsyan - As for the limits of expansion... In 2011 a number of CSTO member-states had already ratified the protocol on the amendments to be made to CSTO regulations, regarding the abolition of the principle of making decisions only in case of a consensus. From that moment on if a participant acts against a definite decision or abstains, it is only released from responsibility for its consequences.

This innovation makes CSTO considerably more flexible in issues on the provision of the security of member-states, and this directly relates to Armenia. Thus, before the adoption of this amendment, the factor of the membership of the Republic of Armenia to the Collective Security Treaty organization (CSTO which includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) was practically reduced to the possibilities of purchasing armaments and defense technology of Russian production at preferential and Russian prices, and there was no need to speak of the enforcement of Article 4 of the Treaty. Here not even the very fact of the hypothetically probable involvement in the military actions was important, first and foremost with regard to the military forces of the Russian Federation in the territory of Armenia, but rather the emergence of a political crisis within the CSTO which is so much undesired by the Russian Federation, in which the other member-states would most likely occupy (mostly due to economic (oil and gas) and confessional reasons) a neutral position with regard to the military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

It seems more realistic that now timely, adequate and large-scale assistance will be provided by if not all, then at least some responsible members of the CSTO, in the conditions of the latent neutrality of the others.



Alexander Skakov - Yes, on the whole this is a change for the better in CSTO. And still in the end here we are speaking exclusively about Russia's role. No other country from among CSTO member states will ever try to interfere in Caucasian matters, moreover to support Armenia, even Belarus. And another question. What position would Russia itself take in the case of a crisis between Armenia and Azerbaijan? In the end, Russia has special relations with Azerbaijan, too. If it is possible to bypass these obligations, for example, under the excuse that Nagorno Karabakh Republic is an Azerbaijani territory and correspondingly, the obligations of the Russian Federation do not relate to it.



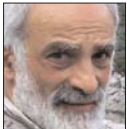
Sergey Sargsyan - New tendencies... NATO has a similar principle with regard to the involvement in the operations in Libya: it ensure the participation of only those entities that have a direct interest. Really, for example, the Czech Republic, probably did not take part, however neither did it offer any resistance. So, some NATO members are doing COMMON work. And this is neither the USA nor France together with Italy that are bombing Libya, but the largest (I will repeat myself "by many parameters") military and political organization!

However, here a question comes afore: and what about financing? And the answer should be looked for in Chicago in a couple of months.



Arastun Orujlu - I would like to especially highlight a key point with regard to the European missile defense. It is possible to agree to Alexander Skakov's argument that "no threat was posed by the Libyan, Syrian, and other rotten regimes for Europe," but I would agree only conventionally. Let us recall Afghanistan, where there was practically no regime present, whereas in the end a whole state was under the full control of the terrorists, the results of which we could easily witness in Madrid, London, New York and so on.

... As for European missile defense. To my mind, this is one of the most important programs implemented by NATO and it is even more important that this program is being implemented right now. I may assume that in the long run everyone will agree on the importance and the timeliness of this program when some of the richest and most rotten regimes receive (or purchase) not only the most contemporary missiles, but also the nuclear military loads to them (God forbid!). And when they start to blackmail not only Israel, but also Europe, it will be a bit too late to think of such a program.



George Tarkhan-Mouravi - NATO has both a unity of members, and a system of coordination and joint decision-making, and a number of actions that are realized under its auspices. That is why to pay attention only to one aspect of this triad leads to wrong conclusions.

... The interest of the countries in South Caucasus regarding cooperation with NATO is naturally varied. However, I did not understand the idea that if these countries are admitted into NATO as its members, the process will be one for all and at the same time. Why is that, I wonder?

On the motivations for cooperation between the countries in South Caucasus and NATO

And again the motivation is partly varied. For all the three countries cooperation with NATO is related to self-perception as part of the Western world. For Georgia this is both an opportunity to ensure its security and an initial state on the way to the integration into the EU, and also some secondary moments that will be discussed below. For Armenia and Azerbaijan, besides the factor of mutual adversary, this is both an element of a multi-directional foreign policy, and a possibility for the modernization of the military forces, and an opportunity to introduce itself as a state that is an active participant in international processes. And surely, the ruling elites have their own motivation, a wish to travel to Brussels and to communicate at almost the same level.



Alexander Skakov - As for the expansion of NATO, it would be more reasonable to admit everyone at a time, because it would be strange to admit first Armenia, and then Azerbaijan. Or, vice versa. If these countries are at a step away from war against one another, they can be admitted only together. I hope that we will manage to normalize the relationship between them as much as we can, through external pressure, of course. And if there is such an objective set. It is not noticeable so far. As for Georgia - it is de jure at a state of war with Russia. That is why its admission to NATO is even more difficult currently.

... The admission of Georgia to NATO (it is clear that unlike Armenia and Azerbaijan there is consensus in this regard in the Georgian society) will be possible, if the relations between Tbilisi and Moscow at least normalize. This is possible only in two cases - if Russia refuses from Abkhazia and South

Ossetia and if Tbilisi does acknowledge the independence of these republics. Either case is equally impossible. Correspondingly, the admission of Georgia to NATO is also impossible. If we imagine the least probable, that Tbilisi will acknowledge the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia - will the interest in the admission to NATO still be retained by Georgia in this case? I doubt. NATO is not a springboard for integration into the European Union. Turkey's example is a very vivid demonstration of this. Moreover, the EU is in a prolonged crisis and its future is alas up in the air.



Sergey Sargsyan - I am impressed by the stable unwillingness of the Alliance to actively interfere with the process of the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, giving this prerogative to the OSCE Minsk Group.



Alexander Skakov - The problem of NATO and Armenia or that of NATO and Azerbaijan is not equaled to the "stable unwillingness of the Alliance to actively interfere in the process of the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict."

The issue here is different - why isn't NATO trying to do something for the exclusion of the military scenario? And this scenario is becoming more and more realistic month by month. Well, yes, it is impossible to regulate the conflict. However, it is possible to preserve the conflict frozen. It seems there is simply no such objective set.



Laura Baghdasaryan - The mechanism of the exclusion of war. The statement of the question made by A. Skakov on the opportunities of NATO for the exclusion of war in the Karabakh conflict which is "becoming more and more realistic" is very interesting. An impression is made that it is NATO that has all the same authorities as say Russia, that is, it is a Co-Chairing country in the Minsk Group and is directly dealing with the issue of the conflict. I wanted to speak on the opportunities of NATO with this regard on the exclusion of war in 2008. The parallel is drawn immediately, if we view this issue in the given plain.



Alexander Skakov - Yes, in 2008 NATO did not do anything substantial not to allow for the war. I do not think that in NATO or in Washington there was someone who deliberately provoked the war. It seems they have simply underestimated the situation at that time. The war became probable and predictable at the end of the spring - in June 2008. There was very little time; the signals might have failed to reach the addressees. However, the situation is different now - they have long been speaking about the probability of war in the zone of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the intensity of this discourse is augmenting, and the situation along the confrontation line is getting worse on the whole. Now there is both time and opportunities. Opportunities to make the parties understand that the military solution is absolutely unacceptable. Let's assume that the start of aggression by Azerbaijan will have its consequences in the form of the acknowledgement of the independence of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh. In such a case there will never be any war whatsoever, it is quite an appropriate measure. As for the year 2008, I concede that there might have been some provoking signals from Moscow, which would make it clear that Russia is not interfering. As for the current authority of Russia - I think it is

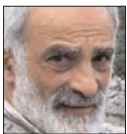
making a very untalented use of them.



George Tarkhan-Mouravi - I think that if there were any confidence in the factual predetermination of the admission of Georgia to NATO, it would be more logical to assume that Georgia could delay its actions. It is difficult to find any justification to the actions of either Saakashvili or Russia, but if we are to look for logic, it is just the opposite. The problem is just in the lack of logic in their actions and in the peculiar understanding of the national interests by all the parties involved. Russia had much more opportunities to prevent the war than NATO did, however the interest seemed to be the opposite - to provoke it.



Alexander Skakov - And why should Russia have prevented the war? I do not see any interest. There can be no altruism here. And on the contrary, it was possible to find motives for the prevention of the war with NATO. As for the relation between the admission into NATO and the beginning of the war - it is much more difficult for a NATO member to start a war. There are more pairs of eyes watching it, and there is a higher level of responsibility. By the way, this is one of the reasons why things did not develop into an armed conflict between Turkey and Greece at that time.



George Tarkhan-Mouravi - My question is addressed to my colleagues from Baku and Yerevan: if there is a military action by Israel and/or the USA against Iran, what role will NATO play and how will such events impact on the security of Armenia and Azerbaijan?



Arastun Orujlu - Any military operation against Iran would have tragic consequences for the whole of South Caucasus. I would especially like to underline the long-term negative consequences for Azerbaijan because of the probable mass inflow of refugees from Southern Azerbaijan. Besides, if such an action is undertaken by Israel, Azerbaijan, who has quite close cooperation with that country, would suffer much more. It is not excluded that such a development could provoke Russia to actively interfere into the region.



Sergey Sargsyan - Currently they have been talking much of the renewal of the war in Nagorno Karabakh under the cover of the general confusion over the war in Iran. How will that happen, though, are the armies of the parties going to maneuver among the crowds of hungry and wild refugees from Iran? Are they going to wage a war against the background of a humanitarian catastrophe? The refugees are most likely to eat up the food supplies of all armies, and they will use the army fuel to warm themselves. I may assume that they may outnumber the total number of the military of all the three parties of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. And in the worst case scenario also the whole population in South Caucasus. It seems to me that the danger lies in a different matter: Already at a real threat of a strike, just similar to the period after it (no matter whether there is one wave of a "pointed" or "carpet" bombing, or whether there are several waves or a full-scale military operation), in the countries in South Caucasus there will appear at least dozens and dozens of thousands refugees from Iran...

The operation will come to an end, or the danger of holding the operations will go away. However, would the refugees go back? Or would Iran under the cover of the general confusion solve a few of its own issue?

What should be done in such a situation? It is much better not to let it happen. By all possible means. This is the very issue that should come to unite the efforts of not all the parties of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, but also all the countries in the region.

Discussion topic: Relations between Russia and NATO and their impact on the security of the countries in South Caucasus



Laura Baghdasaryan - The relations between Russia and NATO in fact reflect the relations and the level of cooperation as well as the depth of the lack of understanding not only between Russia and NATO, as a collective organization, but also in many aspects that derive from the bilateral relations between Russia and the leading member states of the Alliance.

There is an opinion that the stereotypes of the past loom over the mutual perceptions of Russia and the NATO countries, and that the forms and the spheres of cooperation between them, regardless of the periodical phases of the exacerbation of the discourse, are still expanding.

Those who would like to see the opposite put forth different arguments; and their arguments do not seem very unworthy to be paid attention to.

In any case, the relations between Russia and NATO do influence the security of many countries, including those in our region. And perhaps, especially the security in our region. According to the reports received from various sources, there will be no NATO - Russia summit in Chicago, since there is nothing to discuss there, if there are no changes in the positions with regard to the European missile defense, and G8 will take place in Camp David for this very reason. It appears that there are no more problems in the mutual relations between Russia and NATO, right?



Alexander Skakov - The issue of the relations between Russia and NATO, their present and future, may be divided into two levels. The first one, that is key for now (and I think it will also remain such in the near future) is Russia's relations with the leading countries of the Alliance. The second one is the relations of Russia with the Alliance as an organization. The developments of the previous year have had a certain, also a negative, impact on the first level of the relations. I mean the operations in Libya, Russia's "special" position with regard to Syria, and the situation around Iran. The operations in Libya, that ended with the triumphant murder of Colonel Kaddafi and a complete anarchy in the coun-

try, was in fact waged by the "coalition of the willing" (including, for example, Qatar), and not NATO. Consequently, this operation had only a mediated effect on the relations between Russia and NATO (through the Russian and French, Russian and American and other relations). So long the same "coalition of the willing" has been the active agent also in the Syrian case. Respectively, here we are not speaking of the relations between Russia and NATO either, but rather the relations of Russia with this or that country of the Alliance. For example, the radically anti-Assadian position of Turkey has already affected the Russian and Turkish relations. We will most likely see the "coalition of the willing" in action also in the hypothetical case with Iran. "The coalition of the willing" does not necessarily have to have the same members in different cases. In any case, they are temporary unions. Correspondingly, the aggravation of the relations of this or that country with Russia is also temporary, for this way or other permanent interests will persist. Besides, there is also a balancing factor - the interest of the Alliance or its leading members in Russia and in the other regions of the world. Currently, this is the Afghan transit and the transshipment point in Ulyanovsk. So far this interest outweighs the completely understandable discontent of the countries of the Alliance with the "special" positions of Russia.

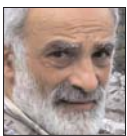


Arastun Orujlu - I think that the relations between Russia and NATO will develop along two lines: cooperation and competition. Part of those regions, including ours, which Russia considers a natural zone of its special interests and special geopolitical influence, are definitely perceived as zones of interest and a part of the international security system by NATO itself, including the South Caucasus region. On the other hand, there are a lot of fields open for potential and necessary cooperation, and as Alexander has already mentioned here, there are some visions that are based upon the old stereotypes, and these visions hinder cooperation. This means that at least in the nearest future the relations will most likely develop along the first line, or in the best case scenario they will be balanced.



Dimitrios Triantaphyllou - I would like to say that regarding NATO and the South Caucasus, it is hard to assume that NATO is going to have a role that is bigger than what it has at the moment. This is due to the fact that the two regional stakeholders in the region, Russia and Turkey, do not want an implicit role for the Alliance in a region where they both want to have the first say. Another reason is that as ever the Alliance is wary of taking on new members although NATO has been projecting the idea of 'partnerships' with non-member states. The differences between the countries of the Southern Caucasus also make NATO involvement problematic. The discussion yesterday about the CSTO does raise the issue of the need to assess the possibility of a developing some sort of security complex in the region where both NATO, the CSTO and other institutions are involved. The issue of the security governance of the region becomes relevant in this context. According to Emil Kirchner and James Sperling, security governance "allows for hierarchical and heterarchical patterns of interaction as well as the disparate substantive bundling and normative content of security institutions. Security governance possesses the additional virtue of neither precluding nor necessitating the privileging of the state

or non-state actors in the security domain; it leaves open the question of whether states are able to provide security across multiple levels and dimensions unilaterally or whether states are compelled to work within multilateral or supranational institutional frameworks." This might be a model meriting attention in the Southern Caucasus as the current approaches to dealing with the protracted conflicts has not produced particularly optimistic results. It is also worth noting that according to a March 2012 SIPRI report: Azerbaijan is the 38th largest recipient of conventional weapons between 2002 and 2011. While Armenia is only the world's 84th largest conventional weapons importer, the Armenian Government has declared that it will procure arms in response to Azerbaijan's arms acquisitions. Also Russia is the main supplier of arms to both countries: in 2007-11 it provided 55 per cent of Azerbaijan's arms imports and 96 per cent of Armenia's arms imports. The gridlock with regard the protracted conflicts, the rising weapons purchases makes the need for some sort of security governance model for the Southern Caucasus all the more pressing. This can only come about if all security actors from the region and beyond find a modus vivendi.



George Tarkhan-Mouravi - On Russia and NATO in the near future... In the near (though hard to forecast future) I would expect an increase in the tension between the parties for the preservation of the degree of cooperation on individual issues. The position of Russia on the key topics will be a decisive factor, which will in its turn depend on the internal political and economic situation, and a broader context of the relations with China and other leading actors. I cannot yet see South Caucasus as a main factor for the confrontation, even though the Russian and Georgian relations may become such a factor in the event of Russian aggression. In the near future it is very unlikely, in my opinion, that there will be a large-scale interference on the part of NATO into the Karabakh issue, even though in five years' time things may change in this field, too.



Sergey Sargsyan - In my opinion, the farther cooperation activities between Russia and NATO are located from the borders of Russia, the more effective this cooperation will be. Neither South Caucasus, nor Central Asia, nor Belarus with Ukraine and Moldova, nor Iran, respectively is covered by this definition.



Arastun Orujlu - To ensure the reliability of the global security system, the North - South corridor is very important, since it embraces such regions as the Near East and South Caucasus. Besides, our region is also important for providing the functional operation of the East - West corridor. Due to the realia that have emerged, NATO cannot afford to leave these regions beyond the scope of its interest, but in the case of South Caucasus the Alliance will witness harsh confrontation on the part of Russia. In this regard I completely agree with George on the point that the increase of tension in the relations will be there to be observed. As for the observation made by Mr. Triantaphyllou on the market of weaponry of South Caucasus, the situation has currently changed abruptly, after Azerbaijan signed a contract with Israel on importing arms from that country.



Dimitrios Triantaphyllou - I would like to add a few thoughts on the issues examined by this Conference (NATO on the eve of the Chicago Summit, NATO and the South Caucasus, NATO-Russia relations and their impact on the South Caucasus).. NATO experts and officials in general raise 5 issues for the agenda at the Chicago Summit in May -- these are Afghanistan, capabilities (where the concept of smart defense comes in); missile defense; Relations with Russia; and the more general notion of partnerships with non-NATO-related countries such as Arab countries (as was the case in Libya) and other countries that are further away such as Australia, Japan, India and even China. Three dark clouds hover the Summit -- the economic climate which has been leading to big defense cuts in European countries; the evolving relationship with Russia in light of the elections where issues such as Missile Defense, the CFE treaty and relations with Georgia are high on the agenda; and Afghanistan with many allies announcing that they are leaving earlier than planned. Some other issues that are part of emerging threats and that NATO will continue to monitor carefully is the relationship between homeland security and NATO as cyber security, pandemics, climate change, terrorism and its new forms are issues which NATO countries spend their money on. The question is therefore, what is NATO's role in coping with these homeland challenges as these threats are not bound by territoriality or sovereignty. Cyber security on its own is also an emerging challenge as it demonstrates the limits of Article 5 -- for example the 2007 Cyber attack on Latvia could not be directly charged to a particular state. Energy security is an issue that will not go away as well although it is usually a commercial issue. Critical infrastructure is also important in relevant in this context. To me at least all of the above shows that NATO's focus is issue based rather than region based...this means less focus on the South Caucasus as a region but focus with it because of Russia, Missile defense, energy, etc.. It also shows that relations with Russia cover a wide number of NATO concerns and therefore it is imperative that NATO and Russia work on these issues (probably to the detriment of the specific interests of the countries of the South Caucasus).



Laura Baghdasaryan - In the course of three days we tried to exchange opinions on the issues of the security of our countries, which, regardless of the seemingly prolonged and often even deadlock nature, are still "in transformation", perhaps under circumstances that do not really depend on us. This is a golden rule for overcoming any disagreements, both among independent individuals, and states, and even their unions. I think that the joint efforts directed at overcoming global, supranational challenges may lead to a better understanding among both states, and their unions.

About the project

The Security of the South Caucasus Countries and NATO

With the support of the Public Diplomacy Division of NATO Headquarters (Brussels) the Region Research Center (Armenia) has started the implementation of the project "The Security of the South Caucasus Countries and NATO" (December 2011 - March 2012).

Within the framework of the project a series of interviews on the most topical issues of international policy and security with experts, analysts, political figures from NATO states and Russia are envisaged to be held for journalists from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

22 different mass media from the three countries of the South Caucasus are involved in the project. These interviews held "first hand" in the Caucasus Journalists' Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net), journalists publish in different mass media.

The participation of the media outlets is arranged on the basis of their applications. Within the framework of the project it is also planned to organize an Internet-conference on the issues of the cooperation of NATO and other security systems with the participation of specialists from different countries.

The full versions of the project materials can be found in the Caucasus Journalists Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net), see: On-line interviews and Discussions.

This electronic bulletin is also prepared within the framework of the project. It is distributed among 600 specialists from different countries and international organizations.

The views expressed in the materials do not necessarily match with those of NATO and Region Research Center (Armenia).



About Research Center “Region”

Research Center “Region” was founded in 2001 and until November 2008 it functioned as one of the autonomous links of the Investigative Journalists of Armenia NGO. Since November 2008 the Center has been functioning as a separate legal entity – an NGO.

Since the very start of its activities the Center has been realizing a number of projects both in cooperation with organizations from Azerbaijan and Georgia, and individual experts, journalists, mass media outlets, and so on.

The activities of the Center have been devoted to various aspects of the mutual relations among the South Caucasus countries, media studies and public opinion polls among the population of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the journalists from the three countries, and so on. “Region” unifies the journalist-analysts and political scientists involved in the issues concerning the Caucasian region.

“Region”:

- Studies the issues concerning cooperation, security and integration of the South Caucasian countries. The analytical articles by the “Region” center are periodically published in Armenian and foreign press
- Studies the Armenian, Georgian and Azeri mass media
- Cooperates with the investigative-political science, journalist-professional, non-governmental organizations of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia and other countries, carries out joint projects with them
- Initiates discussions of socially important issues concerned the South Caucasian countries
- Supports wide information exchange between the South Caucasian countries, creation of a common informational field and effective collaboration in the region.

Caucasus Journalists Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net) is a regional portal, created by Research Center “Region” with the support of the Cooperation in the South Caucasus Program of Eurasia Foundation in 2003. In 2003 -2005 the portal functioned due to the financial assistance received from Eurasia Foundation, in 2005 – 2007 various services of the website (mostly the forum directory) were employed in the realization of various regional projects implemented by Region Center, since 2007 the work on the portal (holding Internet discussions, organizing on-line interviews with figures from Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan for the journalists from countries neighboring the region, issuing the analytical almanac *The South Caucasus* and so on) is fully supported by the European Union.

Region has published a number of books, which also include studies dedicated to various aspects of transformations of conflicts in the South Caucasus.

To better familiarize yourselves with the activities of the Center, see:

www.regioncenter.info
www.caucasusjournalists.net