



THE SECURITY OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS COUNTRIES AND NATO

OPINIONS AND COMMENTS

ELECTRONIC BULLETIN

#3



Topic of the interview: The Relations between Russia and NATO in 2012

From the online interview with the Head of the Department for Eastern Europe and the editor-in-chief of the Russian edition of the *Deutsche Welle* **Ingo Mannteufel** (Germany)



Topic of the interview: NATO Summit in Chicago

From the online interview with the director of the Center for International and European Studies of Kadir Has University (Turkey) **Dimitrios Triantaphyllou**



Topic of the interview: NATO Operations in 2011 and 2012

From the online interview with the Director of the US-Russia, US-Ukraine, and Black Sea Security Programs at the Kennedy School, Harvard University **Sergey Konoplyov** (USA)



Topic of the interview: NATO's Partnerships

From the online interview with the invited expert from the Center of Strategic and International Research (Washington) **Sergey Markedonov** (Russia)



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From the online interview with Senior Researcher, National Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Ukraine, Odessa Branch **Hanna Shelest** (Ukraine)

About the project

The Security of the South Caucasus Countries and NATO

This bulletin is to mark the conclusion of **The Security of South Caucasus Countries and NATO** project, implemented by Region Research Center (Armenia) with the support of the Public Diplomacy Division of NATO Headquarters (Brussels).

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 was held for journalists from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

22 different mass media outlets from the three countries in South Caucasus were involved in the project. These interviews held in the Caucasus Journalists' Network (www.caucasusjournalists.net) brought in "first hand" information to journalists who consequently published the materials in different media outlets.

The selection of the media outlets to participate was based on a prior-to-interview application procedure.

Along with the interviews held within the framework of the project, an Internet-conference on cooperation with NATO and other security systems was organized. Specialists from different countries brought their contribution to the conference.

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 another output 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).

The interviews with experts, analysts, and political figures from NATO states and Russia for the media outlets in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia on topical issues of security and the role of NATO in their resolution were organized within the framework of project "The Security of The South Caucasus Countries and NATO.

This project of **Region Research Center** was supported by the Public Diplomacy Division of NATO Headquarters Brussels.

Topic of the interview:

The Relations between Russia and NATO in 2012



From the online interview with the Head of the Department for Eastern Europe and the editor-in-chief of the Russian edition of the *Deutsche Welle* **Ingo Mannteufel**

www.panorama.am (Armenia)

- It is obvious that after the withdrawal of the NATO troops from Afghanistan a vacuum will come afore in the security issue, and the whole burden will fall mostly on the shoulders of the countries in Central Asia. Taking into consideration the fact that within CSTO frames these countries are Russia's partners and CSTO has a lot to do in terms of addressing and overcoming these challenges, will NATO give additional assistance to Russia and CSTO for this purpose?

Answer - After the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan it will become obvious that in the course of the last 10 years the Alliance ensured also the security

of Russia and the states in Central Asia. From my perspective, this factor is being underestimated by the Russian public opinion. Instead, many people say that NATO's presence in Afghanistan threatens Russian interests. When NATO withdraws its own troops, Russia will have to struggle against drug sale and Islamists much more actively than before. That is why Russia is interested in strengthening its base in Tajikistan. I do not think that NATO will go on cooperating more actively with Russia and CSTO. NATO will not want to raise the status quo of CSTO at the expense of such cooperation. After all, NATO has its own partnership programs with Central Asian states.

www.arminfo.am (Armenia)

- The well-developed economic relations between Russia and Germany prevail over Germany's interests as a NATO-member. Or are security issues a priority to Berlin?

Answer - I do not think that it is possible to contrast these interests. Eventually, NATO's interests are more important to Germany, since our participation in the Alliance is one of the pillars of German democratic statehood. That is why Germany will never ever renounce its membership to NATO for the sake of some economic interests with Russia.

www.news.am (Armenia)

- If we are to assume that a consistently positive dynamics comes afore in the relations between Russia and NATO, what can such cooperation grow into (a new military block, for example)?

Answer - It is necessary to state that all the attempts NATO made to reach compromise were rejected by Russia. That is why I do not think that before the Presidential elections in the USA any new initiative will be put forward by NATO. But I base my assumption on the fact that there will be no aggravation in the upcoming months. Neither the USA nor the European NATO-member countries nor Russia are interested in this. At the same time currently I do not see any positive dynamics within the relations between NATO and Russia that would allow any assumptions on their future development.

www.newsarmenia.am (Armenia)

- Do you think NATO's participation in the potential military operations against Iran possible? What consequences will this adventure lead to?

Answer - The military operations against Iran are certainly fraught with violations of the geopolitical balance in the region. The possession of nuclear arms by Tehran may lead to the same consequences. But it is important not to forget that negotiations are still underway, even though without any results so far. That is why we cannot yet

assert that a military strike at Iran will be undertaken.

www.hetq.am (Armenia)

- What do the most complicated conflicts of interests between Russia and NATO consist in?

Answer - The most serious problem in the relations between Russia and NATO is the mistrust towards each other. Certainly, in some cases we mean a conflict of interests. However, it would have been much easier to get over that kind of conflict if there were mutual trust. Both parties lack this trust today.

As an organization, NATO does not perceive Russia as a source of threat. The Alliance has declared this many times. Certainly, there are differences as to the way in which Russia is perceived by individual NATO member states. If we take into account the history and geopolitical position, it is quite explicable that, for example, the Baltic states are more inclined to perceive Russia as a threat than Germany or the Netherlands. These various perspectives can obviously impact on the dialogue between NATO and Russia in this or that case; however, it is the relations between Russia and the USA that play a decisive role here.

Turan Agency, www.contact.az (Azerbaijan)

- **What could you say about the establishment of a NATO transit point in Ulyanovsk?**

Answer - The establishment of a NATO transit zone in Ulyanovsk, meant for the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan, is first of all a good bargain for Russia. This project could theoretically raise the chances for building up trust between NATO and Russia. However, taking into account the current situation around this center, I do not believe that it can change the relations between Russia and NATO in any way. It's just business.

Novoye Vremya Newspaper (Azerbaijan)

- **When do you think we could expect a complete withdrawal of the coalition troops from Afghanistan?**

Answer -As it is commonly known the ISAF military contingent will be withdrawn from the country no later than 2014. At the same time the West will continue to take part in the fate of Afghanistan. However, the focus will shift from military presence onto the support to restore the country and to ensure security by the forces of Afghanistan itself.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists Network, 28 June, 2012.

For the full script of the interview see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/eng/interview.asp?idinterview=148>

Topic of the interview:

NATO Summit in Chicago



From the online interview with the director of the Center for International and European Studies of Kadir Has University (Turkey) **Dimitrios Triantaphyllou**

www.hetq.am (Armenia)

- How does NATO intend to act in the future if not all Alliance members agree to conducting operations in this or that region? Has the Chicago Summit considered the precedence of some members' refusal to participate in the operations against Libya?

Answer - I would tend to agree with the assessment of Thomas Ries who in a recent article suggested that the result of the inability of the European allies to contribute in a coherent manner to the evolving global security environment is "a lost alliance: unable to orient itself, unable to look forward, unable to specify vital strategic interests beyond basic platitudes, unable to agree which future threats to focus on, and unable to generate military forces capable of addressing them." This growing deficit within NATO is compounded by the shortcomings of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in which many of NATO's European allies take part.

www.1in.am (Armenia)

- Have Georgia's expectations from the Chicago Summit come true and do the adopted documents mean that Georgia will become a country to be

admitted into the Alliance in the course of the following stage of NATO enlargement? When do you think such an expansion may take place?

Answer - I am not sure that Georgia's expectations were necessarily met by the Chicago Summit regarding its eventual accession to NATO albeit Secretary Clinton's remarks that the next Summit would be an enlargement one. Much would depend on the priorities of the next US administration and its relationship with Russia on a variety of global challenges as well as the outcome of the forthcoming elections in Georgia.

www.panorama.am (Armenia)

- The official Ankara had made a statement against Israel's participation in the Chicago Summit. Do you think such behavior is in line with NATO principles, if we are to take into consideration the fact that a dialogue at all levels is especially important for ensuring regional security?

Answer - Of course, Ankara's position is not in line with NATO principles. Ankara, in fact, also tried to promote without success the membership of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia by attempting to change the decision by the Alliance (including Turkey) in the Bucharest Summit of 2008 to the detriment of Greek interests. Nevertheless, Turkey is an important regional security and economic actor and its growing importance needs to be taken into account. Ankara's perceived isolation from the West on many fronts (ranging from the stalled EU accession process to its difficult neighborhood) suggests that a better understanding of Ankara's positions need to be considered without implying that these have to be adopted wholesale by the Alliance.

www.arminfo.am (Armenia)

- Were the unresolved conflicts in the post-Soviet space, in particular the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, discussed at the NATO Summit in Chicago? If yes, in what format and from what angle?

Answer - The protracted regional conflicts in the post-Soviet space were discussed only inasmuch to affirm of the need that these be resolved. Though the support "of the territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova" was reaffirmed as was the need to resolve these on the basis of international law, NATO basically went through the motions regarding the post-Soviet space and included the aforementioned language in the Resolution in order to have something to say as per its principles and those of the UN Charter. Much depends on its evolving relations with Russia which the Summit did not necessarily deal with properly given Putin's absence.

Anna Bartkulashvili, freelance reporter (Azerbaijan)

- What does NATO's "smart defense" program consist in and what was the particular cause of adopting it?

Answer - "Smart Defense" is an attempt to optimize the diminishing commitment to the Alliance by its European allies and the need of the US to shift some of its resources to other threats such as the Pacific. In times of budgetary austerity, the focus is on specialization and cooperation or in other words, how to do more with less. Discussions between France and the United Kingdom about the prospect of sharing their aircraft carriers are indicative of the potential of "Smart Defense." The objective is to ensure that NATO and its member states maintain the military capabilities to undertake the core tasks of the Alliance as these are put forward in the new Strategic Concept which was adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2010.

www.contact.az (Azerbaijan)

- What place did the issue of NATO's future development occupy on the agenda of the Summit?

Answer - The issues of future capabilities and the need to implement Smart Defense as well as strengthened partnerships with countries such as Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand, inter alia, were raised in the Summit and hold a prominent part of the Summit Declaration. Yet, these cannot be successfully implemented if the current European mindset with reduced defense spending and capabilities does not change.

www.news.am (Armenia)

- What were the results achieved at the Chicago Summit after the discussion of the strategy in Afghanistan before and after 2014? Will the Afghan party be ready to assume complete responsibility for ensuring the security in the country at the time of the withdrawal of NATO troops, and will the civil war in Afghanistan have been suspended by that time? What achievements and failures in Afghanistan were highlighted in the Chicago Summit?

Answer - The drawdown in Afghanistan was a major part of the Chicago Summit. Decisions were taken regarding the reduction of the military presence of NATO troops, yet there seems to be a preoccupation with the fact that the withdrawal of troops is coming at a time that the Taliban are becoming more emboldened with attacks across the country. Also at play are the funds that the Afghan National Security Forces require to meet the challenges of transition and taking the lead. Out of the expected 4.1 billion USD needed by the Afghan security forces per year, 1.3 billion USD need to be provided by non-NATO members and partners. But there seems to be a shortfall.

www.tribuna.ge (Georgia)

- What's new in comparison with previous decisions on Georgia in the documents of Chicago Summit?

Answer - The new developments regarding Georgia are the remarks by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on the need to deal with enlargement at the next summit and the participation of Georgia in the meeting between NATO and the aspirant countries. This does not mean that the Chicago Summit was very clear on the prospects of future enlargement for Georgia.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists Network, 2 July, 2012.

For the full script of the interview see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/eng/interview.asp?idinterview=150>

Topic of the interview:

NATO Operations in 2011 and 2012



From the online interview with the Director of the US-Russia, US-Ukraine, and Black Sea Security Programs at the Kennedy School, Harvard University
Sergey Konoplyov (USA)

www.news.am (Armenia)

- How "satisfied" is NATO leadership with the results of the intervention in Libya?

Answer – The official perspective of NATO is inclined towards assessing the operation in Libya as successful. Not only NATO states, but also members of the League of Arab states – the United Arab Emirates and Qatar took part in this operation and trained the rebels in their territories. In the course of the operation

“responsibilities were divided” differently from the NATO operation in Serbia (in 1999 – Editorial comment), when about 90% of the military flights were conducted by US planes. In the given case the European partners of NATO assumed the larger share of the military intervention into Libya.

www.panorama.am (Armenia)

- How do you assess the results of NATO operations in Afghanistan, as a whole, starting from the intrusion into Afghanistan as well as in the course of the last 1 – 2 years? What role do partner states, including Armenia, play in these operations?

Answer – It is hard to say that the operation in Afghanistan was a success. However, not only with regard to NATO. All those who intruded into Afghanistan, eventually left with both political and human losses. You know that a resolution was passed on the withdrawal of the ISAF troops from Afghanistan in 2014. From my perspective, it is bad that the countries took part in the operation to a degree and in a form they believe correct for themselves. Even now the process of the withdrawal of the troops from Afghanistan is not coordinated, that is to say, every country is withdrawing its troops at its own discretion. At least I have not observed any coordination in this process. This operation demonstrated some lack of unity within NATO and particularly indicated that some countries contributed to the operation more than the others. However, by the Charter all the members must make equal contributions.

The operation in Afghanistan has become a trial for NATO’s strength. Many ask the question of whether it was necessary for the operation in Afghanistan to be undertaken by NATO and not by individual countries.

It is not clear yet how many countries will stay in Afghanistan after 2014. Besides, no one has yet spoken of the lessons learnt from the operation in Afghanistan.

www.arminfo.am (Armenia)

- Is the full participation of the block in the announced operations against Iran by the USA after the example of the operation against Libya discussed? Don’t you think that unleashing of a new war will lead to a domino effect in quite an unstable region, especially if we essentially take into account the civil war in Syria?

Answer – I have partly answered that question already. I have not yet seen any announcements and indicators that NATO as an organization has at least tentative plans for operations in Iran. Iran is not Libya and operations here may lead to unpredictable results here, and the USA which makes the largest military and financial contributions to NATO, is already engaged in two simultaneous wars. You know that the Congress has considerably curtailed the expenses of Pentagon. That is why funds

will not suffice for conducting a few more operations at the same time. It is hard to say how NATO will behave in case of a unilateral provocation or strikes at objects in Iran (as I have already said Israel may do this), for NATO is not very likely to initiate an operation against Iran just by itself.

Anna Bartkulashvili, freelance journalist (Azerbaijan)

- What role does Pakistan play in defining the future of Afghanistan? What benefits did the presence of the NATO troops in Afghanistan yield and what will the gain after their withdrawal be?

Answer – Pakistan is a country neighboring with Afghanistan and there are no borders between the two in some places. Hence, in any case Pakistan will have considerable influence on the processes in Afghanistan.

- Today Afghanistan is the main theater of the military activities in NATO. What did this country and its people gain from the NATO operations? What are the positive outcomes?

Answer – First of all, order was established, if not in the territory of the whole country, but at least the larger part of the country and the capital. Assistance was given to the national government in ensuring the rule of law. There are positive outcomes already. Besides, at the request of the government of Afghanistan NATO continues to provide assistance to the country. A lot of money has been invested in the development of the infrastructure in Afghanistan. I have personally talked to people who occupied high-ranking positions in ISAF troops, and they also confirm that quite a lot has been done for the improvement of the living standards in Afghanistan by means of building roads, ensuring the security of these roads for people to trade, building hospitals, training civilian specialists and so on.

www.contact.az (Azerbaijan)

- Five NATO member-states have already either withdrawn their troops from Afghanistan or voiced such plans. How have such steps been assessed in the Chicago Summit by member-states and what were the lessons learnt for the future?

Answer – The issue of withdrawing the troops individually was not discussed in the Chicago summit. I have already said that the NATO countries often make decisions based on their national interests, and this is not always the unanimous decision of the organization.

www.newsarmenia.am (Armenia)

- Do you think the armed resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue probable? What consequences may such a solution have?

Answer – I will reiterate myself, saying that among others, Israel, too, has plans to make the preventive strike. The USA and other countries may also have such plans. But the military resolution of this issue will lead to positive results, and the consequences will be much more drastic than the good such strikes may do.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists Network, 5 July, 2012.

For the full script of the interview see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/eng/interview.asp?idinterview=151>

Topic of the interview:

NATO's Partnerships



From the online interview with the invited expert from the Center of Strategic and International Research (Washington)
Sergey Markedonov
(Russia)

www.panorama.am (Armenia)

- What prospects of cooperation can you indicate between NATO and neighboring countries in the upcoming 5 years? Which are the cornerstone fields within which the Alliance will cooperate with partner states, including Armenia?

Answer – NATO's interest in the Caucasus is specific and limited. Several years ago enlargement possibilities, involving Georgia, were considered, but currently this trend has been put off until better times. NATO is interested in South Caucasus and the neighboring countries first of all in the context of Afghanistan and 2014.

As for Azerbaijan, there is lobbying here, since one third of the shipments to Afghanistan passes through the Azerbaijani territory.

As for Georgia, it is considered in the light of its participation in the operations in Afghanistan, since Georgia provided the largest number of military for the NATO operations in Afghanistan.

As for Armenia, its factor is also being considered by NATO. It is necessary to be constantly alert in the light of the Iranian issue as well as the Near East conflicts. Today we cannot assert with complete confidence how the so-called Arab spring will end and what its final outcomes will be. In comparison with Armenia and Azerbaijan, the degree of interest in Georgia will undoubtedly be higher. Georgia unequivocally announces of its course towards NATO. But in order to know the specificities of the region, it is necessary to cooperate with all the countries in at least a limited number of spheres.

www.tribuna.ge (Georgia)

- NATO declares about the progressive achievements of Georgia on its way to join the Alliance. What do you think NATO considers evidence of progress, attained by Georgia?

Answer – My answer may seem harsh, but why should we analyze rhetoric, especially the one that is not very substantial? NATO declared that there is progress in the issue of Georgia. What did you expect them to declare? To state openly that they do not admit Georgia, and they do not know whether they will ever admit it or not? This is the level of reflection which experts can afford. And politicians must speak of progress and potential prospects. Today NATO cannot offer membership to Georgia. By the way, experts in Russia do not understand that the MAP (Membership Action Plan) is not yet full membership it is only one but last stage of admission to NATO. Macedonia also has a MAP. Georgia has clearly been given homework: "You have elections in 2012 and 2013. Run them and only after that we will speak of promotion."

But these elections need to be held first, and this task is by no means simple, especially if we take into account Merabishvili's nomination who is not perceived unequivocally by the West. It is not clear yet whether Saakashvili will become the Georgian Putin.

www.arminfo.am (Armenia)

- Do you think it possible to combine NATO and Russian standards in the military forces of Armenia? How effective is it, taking into account the fact that Armenia is currently in an unresolved conflict with Azerbaijan? And on the whole, how applicable are NATO standards in the building of armies in the post-Soviet countries?

Answer – I am neither a military officer nor a military expert, and I cannot say how

many canons and machine guns are compatible. But I can speak as a political scientist. The standards of NATO and Russia are not as drastically contrasted in the countries in the post-Soviet space as Russian experts tend to do inside Russia. Georgia is a special case, and it should not be regarded as an example. If we take Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan, too, which suspended its membership to CSTO, it will become obvious that each of the post-Soviet states is trying to develop its relations with both Russia and NATO. Because these post-Soviet states are not large, as a rule, they are willing to consider all the possibilities and the whole of the foreign policy spectrum.

www.1in.am portal (Armenia)

- NATO is most closely cooperating with Georgia from among South Caucasus countries, Azerbaijan comes the second and Armenia is only the last. Isn't this conditioned by the fact that Armenia is Russia's strategic partner, and NATO does not see any prospects in cooperation with Armenia? In your opinion, in what conditions NATO's cooperation with Armenia may become closer? What should Armenia do for such an end?

Answer – I have partly answered this question already. I do not think that everything comes down to Russia. Bilateral relations at least mean a two-way process. Armenia itself, from my perspective, does not feel any necessity to enlarge cooperation with NATO. The Armenian military have been to Kosovo, they have been to Afghanistan, and the expansion of this contingent is not excluded either. Besides its relations with NATO, Armenia has some relations with the USA, EU countries, and France, for example. That is why I do not think that this is only Russia's fault, but I do not think that Russia is a hindrance on the way to Armenia's integration to NATO. What is necessary in order to enlarge this cooperation? I have already said that the necessary element is the pragmatic interest. For example, if NATO takes a pro-Azerbaijani position in the Karabakh issue, the expansion of the cooperation with NATO will hardly be possible.

www.newsarmenia.am (Armenia)

- Do you think Armenia's membership to CSTO hampers its partnership relations with NATO?

Answer – I think that cooperation with CSTO does not create any insuperable barriers, but it makes one cautious. On the one hand, it is clear that by its resources and other possibilities CSTO cannot compare with NATO. We know that the USA is vigilant towards cooperation with CIS countries over which Russia is trying to restore its dominance. Vigilance is there with regard to cooperation with the CSTO, and this does not create any incompatibility of principle.

Bizim Yol Newspaper, www.bizimyol.az (Azerbaijan)

- Azerbaijan's NATO membership is not realistic. Regardless of this fact, the USA would like to extend over to Azerbaijan. From this perspective, which NATO program may Azerbaijan participate in and can the official Baku consider the relations with NATO acceptable?

Answer – The applicability of relations with NATO by the official Baku is a question I cannot answer. But I think that surely, Baku would be like to have more, since Azerbaijan is currently an important partner for NATO. I have already said that one third of the cargo to Afghanistan passes through the territory of Azerbaijan. Besides, against the turbulence in the Near East and the Iranian issue, Azerbaijan is considered a secular Muslim state. There are few such countries in the Islamic world. But at the same time there is no unambiguous choice of the course Azerbaijan will absolutely benefit from. Baku is not satisfied with this. However, the relations with Azerbaijan are important to NATO. NATO criticizes Georgia, teaches democracy, but it does not do the same with Azerbaijan.

Turan Agency, www.contact.az (Azerbaijan)

- Is the Gabalin radar station of any interest to NATO in terms of the buildup of a Euro-Atlantic anti-missile defense system?

Answer – It undoubtedly does. This object was created back in the Soviet times after the standards of the "Cold war" and its coverage is rather wide. Iran is just next door. But at the same time, the interest in the Gabalin radar station is not clearly articulated in the form of concrete steps to be undertaken. At least for now. However, it is also a fact that there is some interest in the radar system.

– Azerbaijan is taking an active part in NATO operations in Afghanistan, providing its air space for cargo shipments, implementing civic projects, funding the formation of Afghan security forces. What assistance may NATO provide on its own part to strengthen the defense potential of Azerbaijan?

Answer – I do not think that NATO will specifically deal with the reinforcement of the defense potential of Azerbaijan, since it realizes the side effects of this process. If we look at the situation around the Israeli-Azerbaijani cooperation, it is perceived unequivocally in Washington, if I am to put it mildly. I do not think that in the relations between Azerbaijan and NATO the defense component will be strengthened.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists Network, 5 July, 2012.

For the full script of the interview see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/eng/interview.asp?idinterview=152>

Topic of the interview:

NATO as a Global Security System



From the online interview with Senior Researcher, National Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Ukraine, Odessa Branch **Hanna Shelest** (Ukraine)

www.hetq.am (Armenia)

- How well grounded is the assessment of some European experts who say that NATO is currently facing serious issues with its own identity? How does the EU crisis get reflected on NATO as an organization?

Answer – Even though the majority of EU members and NATO overlap, the different objectives the organizations have set, allow them to differentiate their participation and to minimize the risks of the internal crises. Certainly, the financial crisis did have a considerable impact on both organizations. However, if it has become a trigger to the EU to review its domestic processes, it entailed only cuts in funds for NATO. Besides, because of the economic crisis the EU is unable to realize the intended deepening in the sphere of defense within the Union, which was envisaged by the Lisbon Treaty. Correspondingly, NATO is the most efficient mechanism in this territory.

During the Greek crisis many discussed the possibility of the withdrawal of Greece from the EU, but no one questioned its membership to NATO.

And the problems with identity are largely conditioned by the external perception of the organization in the light of the altered threats and objectives, rather than the internal self- perception of the Alliance. Currently NATO is not a frozen block, rather it is a living organism which undergoes alterations in order to comply with the modern challenges and the surrounding world: that is why new members are so much interested in it. At the recent meeting in Chatham House in London, Secretary General Rasmussen stated that he saw the Alliance as a unit which was aware of global developments and had a potential to act all over the world. However, in his understanding it is not global expansion, but rather global responsibility , since it

presumes an active cooperation with the allies and partners in different parts of the world.

www.panorama.am (Armenia)

- Don't you think that the formation of a platform of cooperation among regional countries, and not the program of bilateral cooperation with every single one of them will be a more efficient mechanism to ensure security?

Answer – In my opinion, these processes are interconnected and may become mutually complimentary. Every South Caucasus country currently faces different issues with regard to both safeguarding security and the reformation of the security sector. As for the proposed option, it is rather difficult to uniform cooperation here. The countries are at different levels of reform implementation, and in fact, after the collapse of the USSR they have found themselves in completely varied conditions.

Moreover, the level of cooperation with NATO with individual countries depends, in the first place, on their own political will and readiness to cooperate with the Alliance. NATO may develop regional schemes of cooperation to its heart's consent, but if Armenia is not interested in it, while Georgia is ready for a more active cooperation, a uniform approach will at least seem illogical.

www.arminfo.am (Armenia)

- Armenia is a CSTO member. Azerbaijan and Georgia are not at all involved in any security system. How may the Alliance be regarded as a security system in the South Caucasus region, taking into account these realities?

Answer – The security system does not consist of membership to any organization only. This is only an instrument, which may be efficient, and may be absolutely useless. The security system may not involve legal international mechanisms for the regulation of the mutual relations in this sphere, the multi-lateral and bilateral cooperation in the countries in the region, the measures of confidence, the lack of conflicts between the countries, the collective measures to ensure the security, coordination of actions and exchange of information and many other aspects. At this stage, taking into consideration Armenia's complex relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan, the formation of any uniform security system in South Caucasus is absolutely unrealistic.

www.newsarmenia.am (Armenia)

- How will NATO react to the possible aggravation of the situation in South Caucasus, in particular in Karabakh conflict zone?

Answer - If it does not directly threaten one of its members – Turkey, then in no way. Only we will have to wait for political announcements to be made. It is not likely

that the reaction will be more active, than during the Russian and Georgian conflict. NATO has never interfered with the peaceful resolution process over Karabakh. OSCE has been dealing with it, and recently the EU has stepped into the process.

Turan Agency, www.contact.az (Azerbaijan)

- There is a well-spread opinion, that NATO can help in the resolution of the domestic problems in South Caucasus, in the formation for armed forces. Today, Caucasian countries do not cherish the former illusions any more, and NATO's promises are becoming more and more cautious. What can this be accounted for?

Answer – I may disagree with such language of your question. Moreover, I would not put all the countries in the region into one pile, because primarily the countries are facing different problems. Azerbaijan and Armenia are only dealing with the modernization of their armies and do not pay necessary attention to the actual reformation of the military. For example, in Azerbaijan this is taking place first of all because of the unwillingness to see civilians in the Ministry of Defense, as well as to demonstrate transparency with regard to the budget of the Ministry – both being NATO requirements. The Ministry of Defense provides a formal explanation to this, saying, that Azerbaijan is at war. At the same time, reforms in the army are conducted in accordance with NATO standards, since they are acknowledged to be more effective, plus there is the cooperation with Turkey who is a member-state of the Alliance.

As for Georgia, defense restructuring was part of the general reform of the defense sector, ensured by considerable support from NATO, USA, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Turkey. The newly recruited professionals and sergeants were trained with the assistance of the USA and Germany, while the training program for officers at the Military Academy followed by Turkish and British curricula.

Hence, I will take the liberty of reiterating myself, that the level of cooperation is, in the first place, dependent on the willingness and openness of the countries.

The interview was held in the Caucasus Journalists Network, 12 July, 2012.

For the full script of the interview see:

<http://www.caucasusjournalists.net/eng/interview.asp?idinterview=153>



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