



# TOPICAL DIALOGUES

*A "Region" Research Center Project*

# TOPICAL DIALOGUES ON SECURITY

## INTERNATIONAL PRESS-CENTER “DIALOGUE”

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# ONLINE PRESS-CONFERENCES FOR ARMENIAN MEDIA



## GENERAL TOPICS OF PRESS CONFERENCES

NATO Summit - 2016

Features of cooperation between NATO and the South Caucasus countries

Regions of NATO responsibility as an organization of collective security

The principles of NATO activities in a worsening global security situation

Russia factor for NATO agenda

NATO's fight against international terrorism: achievements and problems



**From the online press conference with  
NIKOLAI KAPITONENKO, Director of Center  
for International Relations Research (Ukraine)**

**7.06. 2016**

**On the probability of Ukraine's accession to NATO**

- From my point of view, European security situation has not undergone any fundamental changes over the past 1, 5 years: usual institutions are partially destroyed; The Eastern Partnership has become more of a problem than a solution; Russia opted for revisionism; and NATO is adapting to the new challenges. Consequently the unreadiness of NATO to Ukrainian membership remains as high as it used to be. Today Ukraine, as well as 1,5 years ago – it is a bunch of additional risks, high level of uncertainty and poor contribution to overall security. I would say that NATO increasingly recognized the necessity of deepening partnership with Ukraine, but is still not ready for Ukraine to enter the Alliance.
- On the one hand, NATO is an effective tool for deterring Russia and it is perceived as such by many in Ukraine and Georgia. On the other hand, NATO is the "demon" around which Russia structures its foreign policy in post-Soviet space. To find the balance, to determine its role and to shape the strategy regarding Russia – these are the priority tasks for NATO, fulfillment of which will determine regional security in Europe. This will as well help to understand the perspectives of membership of Ukraine and Georgia. The most likely scenario in my opinion is deepening cooperation with these countries, yet without membership. There is a high potential for this process now, I would say that this potential is higher than the potential for the Membership Action Plan, which was denied in 2008.

**On the need to the revision of the security system in Europe**

- The necessity of revision of the European security system fundamentals became obvious immediately after the so-called "Referendum" in Crimea, because something that did not anyhow fit in the frameworks of the existing world order happened. Russia is strong enough to destroy the accepted security foundations and principles. At the same time, in my opinion, it is weak for creating or imposing those of her own. The relations between Russia and NATO are moving towards the direction of geopolitical rivalry, which will be asymmetric

in contrast to that at the times of the "cold war". As I was convinced for a long time, aggravation of geopolitical rivalry is fraught with new risks for Ukraine. However, right now we do not really have a choice, because the state system is at the stake. Right now NATO is conscious about the danger of Russia's actions for the region as a whole. Thus, the Alliance has a strategy on this issue and knows Ukraine's place in that strategy.

#### **On the sale of arms to parties of the conflict**

- We faced this same issue in Ukraine during the past two years. It taught us the following lesson: It is not NATO selling the weapons; it is the member-states. Whatever the support of NATO for Ukraine, it does not affect the decision on supplying American weapon here. I guess the reverse scheme works two: NATO member-states sell their weapon to whomever they want to, if the latter not involved in the embargo.
- Supplying the Ukrainian weapon to Azerbaijan is in full compliance with bilateral agreements and the multilateral export control regimes; it is by no means directed towards any third party. Ukraine consistently advocates peaceful resolution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict. We should as well consider the fact that Ukraine has reduced the export of weapons more than twice during the past two years.

#### **On the Russian-Armenian air defense system**

- Establishment of Joint Regional Air Defense System is fraught with serious consequences for regional security in Caucasus, but not for the relations between NATO and Armenia. Armenia-NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan has taken into account the nature of the relations between Armenia and Russia, particularly Armenia's membership to CSTO. In my opinion, nothing new is going to happen in this well-established format of relations in the triangle of Armenia-NATO-Russia. NATO as well realizes the importance of communication with all the countries of the Region. The narrowing of such possibilities means only complication of the situation and thus is unlikely.

#### **Expectations from the Warsaw summit of NATO**

- I think that Warsaw rhetoric will generally reproduce the reaction of the Alliance officials to the escalation of the conflict in April. That is to say to call upon the parties to peaceful resolution of the conflict. Direct criticism of Azerbaijan is unlikely in this scenario.
- Ukraine is counting on NATO's political support in terms of territorial integrity and on the approval of the support package of the Alliance concerning practical measures: support in the military and security sector reforms, operation of trust funds, joint trainings, coaching, etc. NATO, in its turn, is expecting stability and

predictability from Ukraine. This is the main reason for President Poroshenko's participation in the Summit. Actually, the main problem lies in the fact that NATO still don't know what to expect from Ukraine. It is difficult to expect long-term commitment from the partners after 25 years of trading the foreign policy. I hope we will be able to send signals to NATO that we are willing to cooperate, even if we do not enter the Alliance in the nearest future. I also hope that Ukraine will be able to show that its experience in resistance to hybrid war is a valuable experience, which can be useful for the Alliance.

**Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1415>**



**From the Internet press conference with  
VASIL SIKHARULIDZE, former defense minister  
of Georgia, currently the chairman of the Atlantic  
council of Georgia**

**15.06.2016**

### **On the prospects of Georgia's membership to NATO**

- Georgia's NATO membership question is not "if" but "when". We have 2008 Bucharest summit decision about Georgia's membership to NATO that was confirmed by every following summits. Seemingly, NATO is in process of defining its future strategy including timing for enlargement. Crises in Europe – occupation of Georgian territories, war in Ukraine, financial, refugees, slow grow of Economy as well as damage to transatlantic unity caused by the Iraq war hindered this process. However, these problems are nothing to what NATO was facing 25 years ago: Soviet occupation of Eastern and Central Europe and direct military threats to all member states. But NATO has successfully overcome these challenges.

As we saw it at Wales summit NATO outlined future strategy. As risks and challenges to the European Security have become more obvious and pressing it has become clearer for many in the West that it requires more holistic and strategic approach to deal with them. I expect in nearest future more coherent and decisive

strategic moves toward Europe whole, free and at peace. It will also include Georgia's membership issue.

Georgia's membership to NATO will require from us strengthening of our democratic credentials. Solidification of democratic institutions, independent media and judiciary, furthering security sector reform in combination with active foreign policy and contributions into international security are key aspects that will lead to the success of Georgia's integration to NATO.

#### **On the Russian-Armenian air defense system**

- I think Russian-Armenian Military cooperation will not and should not influence the process of NATO enlargement in general and Georgia's eventual membership in particular.

#### **On the opposite directions of external security of Armenia and Georgia**

- UN GA resolution on right of refugees and IDPs from Abkhazia and South Ossetia to return to the places of origin and their right to property is a humanitarian resolution and fully in line with UN Charter, Universal Declaration on Human Rights and, in general, with basic norms and principles of international relations in modern world. Protecting rights of refugees and IDPs is highest priority of Georgia's foreign policy.

It's been 9<sup>th</sup> resolution UNGA and every year number of supports is growing. This year 76 countries supported the resolution with only 15 against. I think Armenia's position on this resolution is not only negatively affects our bilateral relation, but also not contributing in strengthening of Armenia's international reputation.

**Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1418>**



**From the internet press-conference with  
PAUL STRONSKI, Senior Associate at Carnegie  
Foundation (USA)**

**25.06.2016**

**On building up of NATO contingent in the member countries bordering on Russia**

- I am not going to say there is no Russian threat to the Baltics, but I generally do not believe that the Kremlin would risk a direct Russian military action in the Baltics. Such an action would lead to a NATO response, and NATO's military capabilities are stronger than Russia's.

That said, Russia has proven to be quite an unpredictable actor and often takes actions that appear to contradict its strategic interests. Its actions in Ukraine, for example, angered the entire Ukrainian nation and turned the population further away from Russia and towards the West. So, Russia's actions contradicted its interests.

What I find worrying is that Russia has conducted provocative actions along the borders of NATO, using all forms of hybrid techniques, as well as some traditional military ones. These hybrid techniques would be harder for NATO to attribute to Russia, therefore complicating NATO members' ability to agree on an appropriate response.

Because of these provocative actions, I expect NATO leaders to reiterate the inviolability of Article 5 at the Warsaw Summit and to work to improve NATO and member state resilience. However, continual provocative actions on the border and incursions into NATO airspace are dangerous in themselves and heighten the risk of an unintended confrontation between a NATO member state and Russia. This is what happened with Turkey last November.

- Russia does not pose a direct threat to the United States, but it does pose threats to our NATO allies – especially in the Baltics, Poland and Turkey – and therefore to



the alliance as a whole. These countries certainly see Russia as a threat, and are calling for a response, which explains why NATO is responding with enhanced military capabilities in the eastern NATO states.

I do not see NATO wanting to or preparing to intervene in Russia at all. I certainly hope the same is true with Russian intentions to the Baltic states. But, both sides have used unhelpful rhetoric. That raises the threat level among Russia's neighbors. Heightened threat levels and exclamatory rhetoric are dangerous in themselves and easily could lead to miscalculations between the two sides. So, even if state's are using the threat for internal political purposes, it is worrying.

### **On NATO prospects of the South Caucasus countries**

- The South Caucasus is not a prime area for NATO. Threats to NATO countries generally emanate from the Middle East (terrorism) or Russia (especially in the Baltics). So, I suspect that NATO will continue to do what it has been doing for the past decade, namely exploring partnerships with all three countries. Although the Georgians certainly want to become a NATO member, I do not see that as a possibility in the immediate future. However, I do see greater training and security cooperation between Georgia and individual NATO allies, especially the United States.
- NATO views these countries as potential partners with Georgia being an aspirant for membership. I do not see NATO membership as realistic for Georgia any time soon, however. There is no consensus in the Alliance on Georgia's membership.
- On Armenia, as an ally of Russia, it is firmly in Russia's security orbit. But, NATO will still continue to engage with Armenia and appreciates the partnership it has had with NATO throughout the past twenty years. I'd also note that Armenian military reform is generally modeled after NATO and the United States, so there are clear incentives on the Armenian side to keep good ties with NATO despite Yerevan's security alliance with Moscow. However, I do not see the relationship between NATO and Armenia getting any closer in the immediate future.

### **On the fight against international terrorism**

- Russia and NATO have never been able to work well together on international terrorism. Mistrust between Russia and NATO states (especially the security

services) is a problem because the security services and law enforcement agencies in Russia and NATO countries are key nodes in the fight against international terror. This mutual mistrust hampers information sharing that could help prevent attacks. Furthermore, we have also seen more rogue copy-cat terrorism (like in Boston and recently in Orlando) that is harder to combat across borders than the terrorism we saw 15 years ago. The patterns of international terrorism are changing and both Russia and NATO countries seem behind the curve in figuring out how to deal with the changing nature of terrorism today.

### **On NATO's position in the Karabakh conflict**

- The NATO alliance is not directly involved in conflict settlement processes in the South Caucasus – so I do not see NATO playing a role in in the settlement processes. NATO, however, remains concerned about the flare-up of the Nagorno-Karabakh war in April and the possibility of renewed violence. For this reason, NATO and the U.S. will continue to encourage Turkey to become a positive actor in the region and to refrain from any direct involvement in the conflict.

**Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1421>**



**From the Internet press conference with  
BATU KUTELIA, Vice President of the Atlantic  
Council of Georgia**

**27.06.2016**

**On the Russian-Armenian air defense system**

- Armenia as every independent sovereign country is free to choose its allies and methods of ensuring its defense and security as well as framework and degree of cooperation with them. Strategic decisions like “joint air defense system” have short and long term effects and it needs to be considered carefully. NATO has no plans to attack or violate air space of Armenia therefore abovementioned joint air defense arrangement impossible to consider as the measure against NATO unless parties (Armenia or Russia) will declare so.

**Expectations from the Warsaw summit of NATO**

- NATO Article 5 states that threat to “some of the alliance member states” is the threat to all of the members, therefore, I think Warsaw Summit will give definite political and military answers to the Russia’s attempted aggressive revisionism.

**On NATO prospects of Georgia and Armenia**

- NATO is strengthening its presence in the countries with clearly expressed political will for it. As NATO SG mentioned policy towards Georgia is “more NATO in Georgia and more Georgia in NATO”.
- Regarding the alternatives for Armenia, I think in the long term perspective, Armenia needs much wider space for defense and security policy choices and as in every democracy these choices should be reinforced by strong public opinion.

## **On building up of NATO contingent in the member countries bordering on Russia**

- After Russia launched war with Georgia and Ukraine it was obvious that Russia denounced basic principles of the international security and is determined to use military power to fulfill its geopolitical desires. Besides the political and economic coercive measures, superior military potential is necessary to deter and prevent Russia's aggressive revisionism, therefore at the NATO Wales Summit decisions were made to increase defense spending's, and also to compensate some strategic or tactical gaps, increase joint allied military capabilities deployment in the NATO countries bordering Russia. This process is happening now.
- Baltic States and Poland as well as all the other NATO member countries are covered by NATO Article 5 – therefore any measures of collective defense or deterrence should be reflected on member countries based on joint defense planning.

## **On Georgia's membership in NATO**

- Georgia NATO membership is the question of “when” not “if”. Georgia politically as well as militarily is ready to start accession talk and become NATO member in accordance of the NATO Bucharest Summit decision. NATO membership process was very important and instrumental for Georgia's statecraft. Now together with the Allies we are working on building final political decision. This decision is not and will not depend upon Russian attempts to hijack the process.

**Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1423>**

## From the Internet press conference with the Analysts of the Polish Institute of International Affairs (Poland)

**ARTUR KACPRZYK**



**KONRAD ZASZTOWT**



**30.06.2016**

### **On the Russian-Armenian air defense system**

**Konrad Zasztowt**

This initiative should be regarded in the framework of Russia's ambitious geopolitical goals. It's not only related to Caucasus regional security, but also to building military capacity to change military balance in a broader region. Looking at Middle East obviously now Turkey is declared the main adversary by Russia. It may, however, change soon, as the Turkish – Russian rivalry is costly to both sides. Still, Russia will always try to use Armenia as an important outpost in the South Caucasus, an element of the wider geopolitical game encompassing the Black Sea region and Middle East.

### **On building up of NATO contingent in the member countries bordering on Russia**

**Artur Kacprzyk**

- Enhancement of NATO presence on its Eastern flank is a part of further response to Russian aggression against Ukraine and hostile stance towards the Alliance. Russia continues to build up its forces along NATO's borders and engages in various kinds of aggressive behavior, such as violations of Allied airspace or buzzing of US destroyer Donald Cook in the Baltic sea by Russian planes in April 2016. NATO's initial reaction, agreed at the 2014 Wales summit following the

annexation of Crimea, has focused on improvement of the ability to reinforce the easternmost Allies in case of a crisis or conflict. Meanwhile, Russia has developed various capabilities (long range air defences, anti-ship missiles, land attack cruise and ballistic missiles) that could impede the deployment of NATO forces. Therefore, placing multinational Allied battalions in Poland and each of the Baltic states will strengthen deterrence by signaling to Russia that NATO would be willing and able to defend its members.

Any attack against these countries would be tantamount to an attack against NATO forces deployed there, triggering further response of whole Alliance. Moreover, forward deployed units would allow to resist the invasion and thus provide enough time for bigger reinforcements to arrive. At the same time, it needs to be stressed that the Alliance's planned deployment is purely defensive and will not constitute a threat to Russia. Four battalions would altogether include around four thousand soldiers, while Russia has repeatedly demonstrated that it could quickly mobilize tens of thousands of troops in NATO vicinity during unannounced exercises. Moreover, even before the NATO's decision to beef up its presence in the East, Russia decided to station two additional armored divisions (each around 10 thousand troops or more) in its Western Military District.

## **On NATO enlargement and NATO prospects of the South Caucasus countries**

### **Konrad Zashtowt**

- Obviously the South Caucasus countries through rapprochement with the Euro-Atlantic community, NATO and the EU are becoming closer to peace and stability. The alternative, whether it is Russia-led Eurasian integration or some kind of isolationism ("Turkmenistan model"), is at best petrifying the status quo, which means high risk of conflict resumption in the areas of "frozen" conflicts, corrupt economic and political elites, deterioration of human rights' situation, growing authoritarian tendencies. Only stability connected to economic prosperity, free market economy, rule of law, democratic standards may convince nations like Armenia and Azerbaijan to solve the conflict peacefully. All these necessary conditions for peace may become reality in case of further rapprochement of the region with European and Euro-Atlantic structures.
- NATO members are indeed not eager at this point to grant Georgia Membership Action Plan, which is necessary step to full membership in the Alliance. On the

other hand, the Alliance underlines that it's continuing open door policy. This year for example Montenegro joined NATO (although its membership still has to be ratified). Regarding Georgia, further practical cooperation, joint military exercises, and continuation of security sector reform is necessary. The ultimate goal, however, is full membership in the organisation.

### **Artur Kacprzyk**

- By signing the accession protocol with Montenegro, NATO members have clearly signaled that the door remain open for new members. Nonetheless, one should not expect Georgia and Ukraine joining the Alliance in the nearest future. Several NATO countries have long opposed such a move, on the ground that it would lead to tensions with Russia. In a present situation, there are also concerns on NATO's ability to protect these countries, should they become members and a conflict erupts. Strengthening of NATO defences on the Eastern flank is already entailing significant political and financial efforts, and so is countering other threats.

Notwithstanding, NATO will remain interested in continuing the process of reforms by both countries, with Georgia being much more advanced. Through the Alliance's assistance in security sector reform and capacity building, and participation in joint exercises, Georgia and Ukraine are not only getting closer to reaching NATO standards, but also enhance their defence abilities. At the Warsaw summit, NATO will offer new assistance packages to both countries.

**Full version of the material here: <http://www.regioncenter.info/en/node/1429>**