



24th Workshop of the PfP Consortium Study Group
“Regional Stability in the South Caucasus”

“After 24 February 2022:
Imagining South Caucasus Security”

– Programme and Workshop Outline –

DRAFT 06 Oct 2022

03-06 November 2022

Reichenau/Rax, Austria

Purpose

In 2012, the Austrian Ministry of Defence, through its National Defence Academy and the Directorate General for Security Policy, resumed the scientific work begun in 2001 (but interrupted in 2005) by the PFP Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes on the South Caucasus. The RSSC SG has emerged as the premiere Track 2 diplomacy platform where intractable conflicts are discussed with discretion, in a serene and academic atmosphere, but within reach of political ears. Deliberations are conducted strictly according to Chatham House rules, and this has contributed to a steady stream of successes, seeing recommendations from nearly a half dozen workshops being considered if not applied by South Caucasus actors.

For example, in 2015, the George C. Marshall Center held a high-level in-camera meeting for South Caucasus deputy ministers of defence, based on policy recommendations produced by the RSSC SG in November 2013. Armenia and Azerbaijan have enacted a crisis hotline, and an exchange of journalists based on recommendations made in past years. There is evidence that public communication techniques suggested in 2015 and 2017 by the RSSC SG are being put in practice in Armenia. The RSSC SG has also leveraged the assistance of outside partners to accomplish a policy recommendation made in November 2017 as Handbook project entitled “Understanding the Contemporary Information Landscape” which will be officially launched in November 2022. The co-chairs are glad to pilot this effort, and to see that the work of the RSSC SG is finding a constructive outlet. Much remains to be done, however, and we expect this work to continue for the foreseeable future.

Past workshops held since 2012 in Reichenau/Rax, Austria, and in Tbilisi, Istanbul, Kyiv, Chisinau, Varna, Minsk, Berlin, Rome, and Naples have demonstrated that the RSSC SG had established a broad academic basis and the cohesion necessary to undertake more ambitious cooperative projects. Thanks to this cohesion, and our participants’ direct and indirect access to decision-making circles in their respective power centres, the RSSC SG continues to produce policy recommendations that are both constructive and practical.

The current geopolitical upheavals that we have witnessed since the beginning of the year demand that the RSSC SG renew its efforts at raising awareness of the risks of persevering in the current conditions. There is no doubt that the tensions flaring up in the world today will be palpable in the conference room, but we trust our supporting organisations the PFP Consortium, and the Austrian National Defence Academy, as well as the workshop participants would help the co-chairs maintain a positive and constructive atmosphere for discussions. It is in this challenging international and regional context that the co-chairs are convening the RSSC SG workshop; **“After 24 February 2022: Imagining South Caucasus Security”** to be held 03-06 November, 2022, at Château Rothschild, in Reichenau/Rax, Austria.

Partners

- Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna
- Directorate General for Defence Policy, Austrian Ministry of Defence, Vienna
- Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Garmisch-Partenkirchen
- European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels
- Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston

Topic Outline

The last workshop of the RSSC SG, “Peacebuilding through Economic and Infrastructure Integration in the South Caucasus” took place in Naples on 23-27 March 2022, a month after the fateful invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces. The topic generated important recommendations, and among them, highlighted the need to explore in a special Handbook the issue of building resilience across a broad range of human security threats and risks in the South Caucasus and beyond. One of the two breakout groups also alerted the RSSC SG and PFP Consortium stakeholders to the risk of escalation and “spoilers” on the new line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh. Those recommendations were prescient, as the risk of escalation in the area, owing to cease-fire violations and non-compliance with prior agreements risks throwing the whole region up in flames.

But it is not only Armenia and Azerbaijan which are threatened, but the whole Black Sea basin, as the promise of NATO membership made Georgia is pointless without Ukraine’s membership. In Eastern Europe, NATO enlargement as ostensible security guarantee seems to be a distant mirage now. Even shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, president Volodymyr Zelensky was ready to countenance neutrality to pacify the Russian Federation. Furthermore, experts have long ago warned that the largest geopolitical risk stemming from the new pattern of “balance of power” conflict management applied to Nagorno-Karabakh is that it might end up entangled with the ongoing Russia-West unmanaged geopolitical confrontation. Indeed, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and the ensuing Russia-West hybrid and economic wars, threatened the current geopolitical structure and arrangements in the South Caucasus, possibly leading into inherent geopolitical choices of the regional states; dimmed the prospects for cohabitation of the European and the Eurasian integration processes; started to create geopolitical roadblocks to regional cooperation and infrastructure connectivity possibly ending up into a new “Iron Curtain” around, or cutting through, the South Caucasus region.

Correspondingly, the RSSC SG must also deploy all its resources and efforts in attempting through its humble means avoiding a further East European conflagration. Now that the geopolitical collision which had been feared has come to pass, we must turn our attention to what type of future, and what type of security would benefit the South Caucasus. For the first time in many years, our workshop will have to consider points of views which are not strictly geographic to the South Caucasus. We are glad to welcome new participants to our workshop, and would ask them to consider the following questions, among others;

- Can Georgia’s separatist territories maintain their self-declared independence and continue to rely on Russian security guarantees?
- What is the value-added by Russia’s military presence in Armenia?
- What prospects are there for the peacekeeping force deployed in Karabakh to stay there beyond November 2025?
- Within the currently fluid geopolitical context, what are the prospects of the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace negotiations?
- What solutions are there to maintain stability on the post-November 2020 frontline, and to smoothen/build momentum for the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process?
- What future for further Euro-Atlantic integration into the Black Sea basin? What alternative options could be offered to regional countries from outside the Western organizations?
- How could the Russia-Turkey strategic partnership in the South Caucasus shore up against geopolitical shock waves in Eastern Europe?
- Should, or should not Georgia consider neutrality or non-alignment for its security?

- Should, or should not (or rather: can, or can not) a new treaty on conventional arms limitation (and flank zones) be agreed between Euro-Atlantic powers, Eastern European and South Caucasian (in-between) countries, and Russia?
- What can be done to deter, prevent, and deal with inter-state aggression in the South Caucasus, and in the Wider Black Sea?

Would there be enough interest in undertaking a new RSSC SG Handbook project focused on building resilience against human security threats and risks in the South Caucasus and beyond? What audiences could be interested? What scope of enquiry, tentative table of contents, timelines, and resources should be envisaged for such a project?

PANEL 1: Georgian Security, Breakaway Territories, and NATO (?)

When it comes to Georgia's future security, the problems posed by NATO membership conditions are well known. This RSSC SG has underlined in the past how Georgia is in fact grappling with a "Catch-22" situation; damned if it does, and damned if it does not. Thus, NATO membership is conditioned by effective territorial sovereignty, and by harmony with Abkhaz and Ossetian minorities. Neither of these two conditions can obtain because of Russia's presence on Georgian territory. Conversely, if Georgia decided to abdicate sovereignty over the two renegade territories, then it would meet both conditions for membership simultaneously; borders would be clear, sovereignty (over a lesser territory) would be assured, and there would be no problems with national minorities. These are conditions that Russia would not allow Georgia to meet. Thus, the sword of insecurity dangles above Georgia because of the NATO eventuality. But would neutrality or non-alignment provide for greater security? Can we expect a change of heart among the populations or leadership of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in view of Russia's lacklustre performance, and how can their fears of forceful reintegration be attenuated? Is there not an opportunity to build bridges between the breakaway territories and Georgia? If so, what kind of political integration can be imagined? If Georgia, with or without Abkhazia and South Ossetia, is to be neutral or non-aligned, what kind of security status should it seek? What kind of relationship with Russia and with NATO? How did the war in Ukraine affect Georgia's security and defence strategy and policies? Could Georgia's potential EU membership offer any security and defence solutions?

PANEL 2: Nagorno-Karabakh as Once and Future Powder Keg?

With the recent cease-fire violations, the prospect of regional instability in Karabakh, which we had warned during RSSC SG 23, becomes a reality. This comes on the heels of Russia's military apparently getting bogged down in Ukraine for many years to come, while signalling its inherent military problems and weaknesses. Those weaknesses might be exploited more and more by the Western powers, notably the United States which, motivated by the powerful diaspora, seems to be attempting to dislodge Russian influence in Armenia at least. Other countries are also opening diplomatic representation there, and are animated by the desire to solidify Armenian democracy. What effect will this have on the resolution of conflict with Azerbaijan? What to make of Iran's re-deployment of troops on the border with Azerbaijan, and warnings regarding the inadmissibility of closing its border with Armenia? Is Iran becoming a sponsor of Russian security operations in the region? Finally, can the content of the Shusha Declaration, uniting Azerbaijan with Turkey produce security for the region? Could this not be the vehicle through which greater NATO involvement in the region be expected, feared, or hoped for?

PANEL 3: The Outer Limits: Ukrainian, Moldovan, and Russian Security

It has been assumed, among other goals, that the objective of the Russian invasion of Ukraine was to seize Ukraine to deny it to NATO enlargement, and thereby effect a junction with Transnistria,

Moldova's separatist Eastern region, and eventually to absorb the latter as well. This attempt at geopolitical rebalancing and re-ordering is a function of systematic insecurity, and the absence of potent security guarantees. For the last thirty years, the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and its adapted form would have provided such guarantees through limitations in flank zones, but the Treaty was unequally applied and ratified. Similarly, membership in the European Union should enable participation of members in the canon of multilateral deterrence through the Brussels Treaty of 1948, which carries an even more stringent Article 5 than NATO's. This Treaty is part of the European jurisprudence and should provide sufficient security. Could it act in NATO's stead for those countries that are closer to the core of the EU? What preparations can Moldova make to better secure itself? Could Chisinau overcome/adapt its current Constitutional neutrality status to allow for broader security and defence cooperation with third parties? How shall the greater Black Sea region deal with Russia in the future? How can Russia recuperate its reputation, as well as have its security concerns taken into consideration?

Editorial Dialogue on Launching a New Handbook: Building Resilience against Human Security Threats and Risks

Based upon recommendations made at the November 2021 Reichenau workshop, participants to the 23rd RSSC SG workshop, held in Naples (Italy) on 24-27 March 2022, urged the launch of a new common project. The main focus of this project, basically agreed in the approved Policy Recommendations, was on drawing up a Handbook on building resilience across a broad range of human security threats, in research areas including: environment, ecology, communication and transportation, water resources management, disaster relief, energy security, food security, health and medical security, cyber security, information security. How to move from collecting and acknowledging best practices to writing effective strategies and policies? "Strategies and policies" were understood as regional, national and sub-national, i.e. as seen from the civil society, local communities and businesses levels. Using the power of the PfPC and the EaP networks, the RSSC SG could aim to distillate current best practices on building resilience against human security threats into effective strategies, policies and concrete measures. A common vision over the future should be translated into a comprehensive list of common regional goals and objectives to be pursued over the next five to ten years. This, in turn, should lead to a deeper common security threats assessment. The PfPC/RSSC SG experts' group in charge with developing this project should also look at the competitive advantages of each country, and at how to adjust joint human security efforts to various countries' political and security agendas.

Programme

Thursday, 03 November 2022

till 18.30 Arrival of the participants

19.00 **Words of Welcome**

Andreas F. WANNEMACHER, Directorate General for Defence Policy,
Austrian Ministry of Defence, Vienna

Official Dinner

Friday, 04 November 2022

07.00 – 09.00 Breakfast

09.00 – 09.30 **Introduction to the Study Group “Regional Stability in the South
Caucasus” and Administrative Remarks**

Benedikt HENSELLEK, Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna
Olaf GARLICH, PfP Consortium Operations Staff, Garmisch-Partenkirchen

09.30 – 10.00 **Keynote Speech**

H.E. Hon. Stéphane DION, P.C., Canadian Ambassador to France and Monaco,
Special Envoy to the EU and Europe

10.00 – 10.05 **Video Message**

Alan WHITEHORN, Department of Political Science & Economics, Royal
Military College of Canada, Kingston

10.05 – 11.30 **PANEL 1: Georgian Security, Breakaway Territories, and NATO (?)**

Chair: George NICULESCU, European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels

Kakhaber KEMOKLIDZE, Georgian State Security Council, Tbilisi
Angelina GROMOVA, South Ossetia expert, Moscow
Guja KHOKRISHVILI, Freie Universität Berlin
Daria ISACHENKO, German Institute for International and Security Affairs,
Berlin

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee Break

12.00 – 13.30 **PANEL 2: Nagorno-Karabakh as Once and Future Powder Keg?**

Chair: Elena MANDALENAKIS, McGill University, Montreal

Benyamin POGHOSYAN, Centre for Political and Economic Strategic Studies, Yerevan

Ahmad ALILI, Caucasus Policy Analysis Centre, Baku

Elkhan NURIYEV, L&M Political Risk and Strategy Advisory, Vienna (TBC)

Yeghia TASHJIAN, American University of Beirut

Andrzej KLIMCZYK, Georgian Strategic Analysis Center, Tbilisi

13.30 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 15.30 **PANEL 3: The Outer Limits: Ukrainian, Moldovan, and Russian Security**

Chair: Frederic LABARRE, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston

Iryna LYSYCHKINA, Academy of the National Guards, Kharkiv

Elena MARZAC, Platform for Security and Defence Initiative, Chisinau

Céline Emma LACOUR, Independent Researcher, Brussels

Boris KUZNETSOV, Centre of International and Regional Policy, Saint-Petersburg

15.30 – 16.00 Coffee Break

16.00 – 17.30 **Editorial Workshop on Launching a New Handbook Project:
Building Resilience against Human Security Threats and Risks (Part I)**

Moderation: George NICULESCU, European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels,

Elena MANDALENAKIS, McGill University, Montreal

Tatoul MANASERYAN, Research Center “Alternative”, Yerevan

Razi NURULLAYEV, REGION International Analytical Centre, Baku

Nilufer NARLI, Bahcesehir University, Istanbul

Andrzej KLIMCZYK, Georgian Strategic Analysis Center, Tbilisi

Ayaz MUSEYIBOV, Independent Researcher, Baku (TBC)

Céline Emma LACOUR, Independent Researcher, Brussels

Armen GRIGORYAN, Centre for Policy Studies, Yerevan

Armine ARZUMANYAN, University of Glasgow

Iryna & Olha LYSYCHKINA, Academy of the National Guards, Kharkiv

Elena MARZAC, Platform for Security and Defence Initiative, Chisinau

Sanda SANDU, NATO Information Office, Chisinau

Elkhan NURIYEV, L&M Political Risk and Strategy Advisory, Vienna (TBC)

19.00 Dinner

Saturday, 05 November 2022

07.00 – 08.30 Breakfast

08.30 – 10.00 **Editorial Workshop on Launching a New Handbook Project:
Building Resilience against Human Security Threats and Risks (Part II)**

Moderation: George NICULESCU, European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels,

10.00 – 10.30 Coffee Break

10.30 – 11.45 **Interactive Discussion – Policy Recommendations Formulation**

Moderation: Frederic LABARRE, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston

11.45 – 12.00 **Official Closing Remarks**

George NICULESCU, European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels
Frederic LABARRE, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 **Departure to the Side Programme**

Sunday, 06 November 2022

Individual Departures