



22nd Workshop
of the PfP Consortium Study Group
"Regional Stability in the South Caucasus"

"Supporting New Conflict Management
Platforms in the South Caucasus"

– Programme and Workshop Outline –

4 – 7 November 2021
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 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 is also leveraging the assistance of outside partners to accomplish a policy recommendation made in November 2017 as Handbook project entitled "Understanding the Contemporary Information Landscape." 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. We are also noticing that the *raison-d'être* for the RSSC SG which is to find ways to develop the South Caucasus' strategic persona, is apparently finding expression in the recent Georgian Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative, announced by prime-minister I. Garibashvili in late 2021.

Past workshops held in Reichenau/Rax, Austria, since 2012 and the wider region (Tbilisi, Istanbul, Kyiv, Chisinau, Varna, Minsk, Berlin, and Rome) 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 continue to produce policy recommendations that are both constructive and practical. The RSSC SG has continued its work throughout the Covid pandemic, hosting three virtual roundtables, each of which has produced actionable recommendations. Furthermore, the first post-pandemic hybrid workshop held in Rome (7 – 10 September 2021) on "Risks and Opportunities of the Emerging South Caucasus Regional Order" has demonstrated that the virtual work, and the 44-Days War on Karabakh have not significantly affected the ability of the Study Group to diligently discuss and effectively produce actionable policy recommendations. Now it is time to take a chance and host this workshop live. With this workshop in Reichenau/Rax, in November 2021, we are hopefully returning to the normal annual schedule of work.

Once again, the South Caucasus is a ferment of activity. One year since the 44-Day War between Armenia and Azerbaijan, diplomatic activity in the region is abuzz, mostly on a bilateral basis. It would therefore be appropriate to review the implementation of the Trilateral Statement of 10 November 2020, which led the last fall war into a generally holding ceasefire. Perhaps this evaluation can be matched against some recommendations that were made in two RSSC SG virtual roundtables (on 4 December 2020, and 7 June 2021) and one post-pandemic hybrid workshop in Rome (retrievable from: www.bundesheer.at/wissen-forschung/publikationen/doktyp.php?id=44). The Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative is an important step forward, and one which should be staunchly encouraged, as it mirrors one of the objectives of this Study Group, i.e. to find a strategic persona for the whole South Caucasus, perhaps based on a formal partnership or institution. The latter remains to be seen. Therefore, perhaps the time is right after all to consider whether restoring good neighborly relations (especially between Armenia and Azerbaijan) cannot

be aided by specialized training. This RSSC SG workshop will therefore endeavour to review the progress in the implementation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan-Russia Trilateral Statement on Nagorno-Karabakh of 10 November 2020, against the backdrop of the RSSC SG agreed Policy Recommendations, and thereby to provide means of “Supporting New Conflict Management Platforms in the South Caucasus”. Your presence would be greatly appreciated at Château Rothschild, in Reichenau/Rax, Austria, 4 – 7 November 2021, for this important workshop.

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

This workshop will focus on three aspects of recent developments in the South Caucasus, and also within the Study Group itself. The most important is certainly the idea promoted by the prime minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, as to the establishment of a “Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative” which would likely involve all three South Caucasus countries. This initiative could not be presented at a more opportune time, as the 44-Days War ceasefire agreement has created a new geopolitical reality founded upon a Russo-Turkish partnership, where Western powers (whether collectively – from within the OSCE and the EU – or individually), as well as Iran are seeking to play their role. The Georgian initiative inherently advocates restraint, and should be supported. One of the aims of this workshop shall therefore be to determine the substance and the possible implications of the Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative on the region. It would also be hoped that the Study Group consider ways to effectively (and perhaps more directly) make its recommendations known to the champions and supporters of this initiative.

During the Rome workshop, suggestions were made for a variety of platform formats to mediate and negotiate restoring good neighbourly relations between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey for further improving stability. These platforms include Georgia, and therefore it would seem that, conceptually at least, there is commonality (if not some overlap) between the ideas presented by Mr. Garibashvili and the RSSC SG policy recommendations over the past years aiming to support various forms of regional cooperation in the South Caucasus. We believe the RSSC SG would be of substantial assistance if it were able to determine how well the provisions of the November 2020 Trilateral Statement were implemented (if they were in any shape or form) and what it is the way ahead towards their consolidation. We would therefore encourage our participants to look critically not only at this issue, but also at the possibility of lending assistance to further implementation through past policy recommendations (such as the conflict resolution ideas presented in Rome), or through new ideas presented during this workshop. The overall intention therefore is to generate ideas that help dialogue move forward towards new forms of conflict management and regional cooperation. In that latter case, much has been made of the promises of economic cooperation in bringing about a more lasting peace to the region.

This peace is under severe stress with the emergence of Iran as a potential spoiler. Although the information is still partial as to the involvement of that country into South Caucasus affairs, the potential for a wider conflagration cannot be discounted; with the Turkey-Azerbaijan dyad formalizing its relationship under the Shusha Agreement, a confrontation would naturally involve a NATO ally of prime importance to the Alliance. There are also consequences for Armenia; by

seeking the support of a rogue state like Iran, the international community might be less forthcoming with its sympathy and support. Also, current American legislation designed to counter Iranian influence might affect Armenian businesses negatively. Despite the rarity of information and the speculative nature of what we propose above, participants would be welcome in giving their advice on such a crucial development.

This should not deter us from seeking constructive solutions. In June 2021, a model of education/training regimen that could be of service to both Armenia and Azerbaijan simultaneously was proposed. Originally proposed under the NATO DEEP program, the September 2021 workshop in Rome examined the feasibility of such an approach (see Policy Recommendations for the June 2021 Virtual meeting and Policy Recommendations for the September 2021 Rome meeting). It was concluded that the time was inopportune to adapt or employ the DEEP program for joint or parallel delivery to Armenia and Azerbaijan, but that other formats not involving NATO might be envisaged. The 22nd RSSC SG Workshop is therefore undertaking due diligence to ascertain whether the creation of educational support in terms of conflict management and resolution is feasible or not and under what conditions such a support might be offered by the RSSC SG and/or the PFP Consortium.

We expect participants to explore the following questions, among others;

- How can the RSSC SG bring substance to the Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative?
- How can Georgia's constructive regional leadership be supported?
- How well were the provisions of the Trilateral Statement of 10 November 2020 implemented so far?
- How useful were the approved RSSC SG Policy Recommendations so far in supporting the peace process initiated by the Trilateral Statement? What went well and what did not work and why?
- What have been the biggest challenges to building a stable and reliable peace leading to the normalization of Armenia-Azerbaijan, and Armenia-Turkey relations, and how to overcome them?
- Is the time ripe for proposing and supporting the creation of educational material on conflict resolution to bring Armenia and Azerbaijan together?
- Can a topical outline be prepared ahead of time to support Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict management if the time to bring the two belligerents is not propitious?
- Can novel solutions be proposed to address other regional conflicts, such as the idea of "leased" sovereignty, briefly alluded to in Rome, to cover the divergences of status between Georgia and its breakaway regions?

PANEL 1: Georgia at the Forefront of the Peaceful Neighborhood Initiative

Georgia has skillfully seized upon the opportunity of the 44-Day War between Armenia and Azerbaijan to propel itself forward as an honest broker and a model to follow. How can the RSSC SG support such a constructive stance? How well does the Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative be implemented, and what is its content? Can the RSSC SG add to the substance of the initiative? Another important aspect to consider is whether the ideas presented by the Georgian MFA are a response to a qualitative change in NATO's appetite for enlargement. Opinions are divided on the matter, so it is worth asking whether the "Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative" is a response to the geopolitical transformation of the South Caucasus region in the wake of the 44- Days War on Karabakh. Some ideas were put forward in Rome concerning Georgia's relationships with renegade regions. One was the idea of "lending" or "leasing" sovereignty to de facto regions for a limited time, a sort of "trial separation", a form of temporary self-governance.

PANEL 2: Moving Ahead from Post-War to Peace

One year after the end of the 44-Day Karabakh War, there is the feeling that the South Caucasus is not moving towards peace and regional stability. But it looks like it is going the other way around. The trilaterally signed Statement of 10 November 2020 is far away from a peace agreement. It left open key issues, many of whom have become bones of contention to the signatories and have made for a precarious peace and an uncertain future not only for the population of Karabakh itself, but also for the wider South Caucasus region. Therefore, it would be necessary to evaluate the relative success of the implementation of the Trilateral Statement of 10 November 2020 which concluded the 44-Day War between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This panel should also consider those key issues that have remained unaddressed by the belligerents and propose practical recommendations (or recall past recommendations) to restart short-term conflict management and to ensure medium and longer-term strategic patience and conflict transformation.¹

PANEL 3: Providing for Conflict Management and Resolution

One of the roles of the RSSC SG is to produce educational material that can be of practical use to regional actors, either at official level, or at civil society level. While parallel DEEP programs for Armenia and Azerbaijan have been deemed unfeasible for administrative and political reasons, there is nevertheless a question of maintaining the RSSC SG's attention on the possibility and ascertaining under which conditions the creation of a program of training and education on conflict escalation and de-escalation, and historic comparative studies would be possible within Armenia and Azerbaijan. Among other topics of discussion, this panel could consider the audience of such an initiative, the level, the intensity and delivery methods, and, last but not least, some content. This panel is basically an exercise in due diligence, one of care for the opinions and efforts deployed by participants.

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

As usual, interactive discussions held in Chatham House rules format are the platform to develop actionable policy recommendations by the RSSC SG, as moderated by the co-chairs. We invite all participants to take advantage of this opportunity to make constructive proposals on each of the topics discussed. As always, these policy recommendations are disseminated throughout the PFP Consortium network, covering some 50 countries, and 800 policy and academic institutions.

¹ Thomas De Waal, "The Nagorny-Karabakh Conflict in Its Fourth Decade", CEPS Working Document, September 2021: "The short term requires 'conflict management' to try to build on the fragile basis of the new 2020 ceasefire and keep the two sides from resuming violence in the period before the five-year mandate of the Russian peacekeeping forces is set to expire in 2025. The longer term calls for an approach of strategic patience and 'conflict transformation' in which more work is done inside Armenian and Azerbaijani societies rather than between them."

Programme

Thursday, 4 November 2021

- 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, 5 November 2021

- 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
- 09.30 – 10.00 Opening Address
- LTG Erich CSITKOVITS, Commandant, Austrian National Defence Academy
- 10.00 – 11.00 PANEL 1: Georgia and the Peaceful Neighbourhood Initiative
- Chair: George NICULESCU, European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels
- Elguja KHOKRISHVILI, Georgian Institute of Politics, Tbilisi
Nika CHITADZE, Center for International Studies, Tbilisi
Michael CECIRE, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe,
U.S. Helsinki Commission, Washington, DC
Giorgi KANASHVILI, Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts,
Tbilisi
- 11.00 – 11.30 Coffee Break
- 11.30 – 12.30 PANEL 2: Moving Ahead from Post-War to Peace
- Chair: Mahir IBRAHIMOV, US Army Command and General Staff College,
Fort Leavenworth
- Elena MANDALENAKIS, McGill University, Montreal
Razi NURULLAYEV, REGION International Analytical Centre, Baku
Armine ARZUMANYAN, University of Glasgow
Ahmad ALILI, Caucasus Policy Analysis Centre, Baku
Tatoul MANASERYAN, Research Centre “Alternative”, Yerevan

12.30 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 15.00 PANEL 3: Providing for Regional Conflict Management and Resolution

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

Oktay TANRISEVER, Middle East Technical University, Ankara

Taline PAPAZIAN, Armenia Peace Initiative, Paris

Johnny G. MELIKYAN, Public Relations and Information Center, Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan

Anastasiya CHALENKO, Youth Diplomacy Center “Legatus”, Moscow

15.00 – 15.30 Coffee Break

15.30 – 17.00 Interactive Discussion:

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

19.00 Dinner

Saturday, 6 November 2021

07.00 – 09.00 Breakfast

09.00 – 10.00 Interactive Discussion: Policy Recommendation Formulation

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

10.00 – 10.30 Coffee Break

10.30 – 11.30 Interactive Discussion: Policy Recommendation Formulation
(continuation)

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

11.30 – 12.00 Closing comments

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

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 Side programme

Sunday, 7 November 2021

07.00 – 09.00 Breakfast

Individual Departures