



# Armenia and Georgia in the Context of Current Political Developments. New Challenges and Opportunities in the Realm of Regional Security

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# NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARMENIA AND GEORGIA IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL SECURITY

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Following the change of government in Georgia in 2012, which led to the easing of tensions between Russia and Georgia, one got the impression that Yerevan and Tbilisi were now better positioned to improve relations, including in the regional context. However, the 2013 Ukrainian crisis and the abrupt deterioration of relations between Russia and the West also affected the new geopolitical context of the South Caucasus and the former Soviet Union in general, creating new challenges and possibilities for Armenia and Georgia.

In particular, the situation is affected by the difference in the two countries' choices concerning political and economic integration with third actors or organizations, i.e. the EU and the EEU. As a development of that trend, Armenia and Georgia tend to position themselves differently with regard to the Ukrainian crisis and the strife between Russia and the West.

Nevertheless, the last years have seen a positive dynamic in Armenian-Georgian relations, including in the context of regional security and integration. This is in many ways due to the sufficiently stable algorithm, developed in the post-Soviet period, of interaction and problem-solving between Yerevan and Tbilisi.

## ***Parameters of the Armenian-Georgian political modus vivendi***

It is no secret that Armenia and Georgia have contrasting approaches to security issues and relations with competing superpowers, political and military-political structures. It became particularly obvious after the 2008 August war between Georgia and Russia. Russia is Armenia's main military-political partner, both in a bilateral format and via the Collective Security Treaty Organization, while Georgia is a historically close neighbour and Armenia's key communication partner, with quite tense relations with its northern neighbour. This is why the political perception of Armenia and the Armenians by the Georgian society and elite is largely defined by their negative opinion of the current military-strategic partnership between Moscow and Yerevan.

Armenia, for its part, keeps an eye on the partnership between Turkey and Azerbaijan, wary that these two countries might amplify the existing transport and communicational blockade of Armenia. The two countries' communication and infrastructure projects, which Azerbaijan openly admits are directed at Armenia's further isolation, also spark concern in Armenia.

The positions of Georgia and Armenia with regard to the resolution of ethnic conflicts in the region still differ in many respects. Georgia supports the principle of territorial integrity with respect to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while Armenia supports the self-determination principle in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The problem of Javakheti, an Armenian-populated region of Georgia, also plays an important role in the bilateral relations between Armenia and Georgia. The fact that this administrative-territorial region bordering on Armenia has a one-hundred-thousand-strong ethnic Armenian population has been a source of mutual suspicions and fears.

At the same time, the two countries have strong points of contact and traditions of cooperating based on realistic pragmatism and willingness to take each other's interests into account whenever possible. For example, Armenia has not recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while Georgia tries to stay neutral with regard to the Karabakh conflict.

On a global level, in the framework of the European Union's Eastern Partnership program, the two countries' positions are quite similar, although right now Georgia has taken the lead after the ratification and the beginning of implementation of the AA and DCFTA. Also, Armenia and Georgia are bound by a close and profitable relationship with the United States, if we take into account the influential Armenian community in the U.S. and the American support to Georgia. The result of all factors listed above is a stable political *modus vivendi* between Tbilisi and Yerevan.

### ***The Russian factor: an eternal constraint?***

In the last decade, Bidzina Ivanishvili's government's rise to power in Georgia became one of the most positive factors in Armenian-Georgian relations. Starting in late 2012 and until mid-2013, the Georgian administration made an effort at least not to aggravate relations with Russia if not normalize them (that became possible later, despite the Ukraine crisis). Against that background, the political and military cooperation between Armenia and Russia need no longer be viewed by Georgia as a constraint but rather, as a window of opportunity.

In some sense, this was expressed in a peculiar (maybe even subconscious) attempt of the new Georgian authorities to adjust their foreign policy. Some elements were added to Georgia's foreign

policy that were similar to the Armenian “complementarism”. The reason for this was the disappointment of the Georgian political elite with President Mikheil Saakashvili’s single-vector policy. The dangers of Georgia’s bold but unbalanced foreign policy became clear in August 2008. This is why during his first official visit to Yerevan in January 2013; Georgian prime-minister Ivanishvili openly stressed the advantages of Armenia’s balanced foreign policy. He noted that “Armenia is a good example for Georgians [in this context]. We can only envy you in a good way”<sup>1</sup>. Naturally, this expression received heavy criticism from Saakashvili and his administration, demonstrating that attempts to rethink Georgia’s foreign policy require wide public support.

However, a “pro-Russian” U-turn in Georgia cannot and will not take place. This is evident from the current Georgian government's consistent implementation of the country’s main foreign policy priorities, including with regard to the NATO and the EU. This approach cannot be seriously affected by internal political developments in Georgia, including perturbations in government agencies.

One of the results of the not quite voluntary but still unfolding accession of Armenia to the Eurasian Economic Union became the increasing discontent amongst the general public and some segments of the political class with Moscow’s current regional policy. But it is unlikely that this will change the military strategy framework of Armenian-Russian relations in the short-term or long-term perspective, thus hardly integrally changing the Armenian-Georgian relations.

The Russian factor will continue to affect the Armenian-Georgian interaction in the regional context, as well as the fact of membership of Armenia in the CSTO. Although from Georgia’s point of view, Armenia’s membership in the military-political block under Russia’s patronage does not make much difference given the overall character of the Russian-Armenian military strategic relations.

Similarly, dramatic developments are not to be expected in Abkhazia, another territory strongly affected by the Russian factor. With Russia strengthening its military-political presence in Abkhazia, any breakthroughs in relations with Georgia are unlikely, including with regard to the rather politicized issue of resuming operations of the railroad via Abkhazia.

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<sup>1</sup> RFE/RL. “Interview: Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili”, *RFE/RL*, January 18, 2013 [www.rferl.org/media/video/24877492.html]

## ***Between the EU and the EEU***

Up to September 2013, Armenia and Georgia moved at more or less the same pace towards integration with the EU. However, in Georgia's case it led to the signing and, starting summer 2014, the implementation of an Association Agreement with the European Union, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement (DCFTA). In the case of Armenia, which was forced by Russia to refuse signing the AA and enter the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, European integration means constant anticipation of the renewal of the integration process with the EU once external conditions are more favourable, and the attempt to combine it with future full membership in the EEU.

Against this background, Georgia's success in effectively implementing the Associated Agreement/DCFTA in Vilnius will have positive impact on Armenia, especially in the economic sense. It will imply the gradual creation of a European economic and political domain immediately bordering Armenia. The success of neighbouring Georgia will serve a good example, encouraging Armenia to continue domestic reforms and synchronize its legal and economic environment with European standards even without making political commitments to the EU.

It is natural that Georgia's success will not imply instant changes in the bilateral relations but in time, it will lead to positive change. For example, the ongoing modernization of customs facilities on the Armenian-Georgian border and simplification of border crossing procedures (even in the event of Armenia's full membership in the EEU) will contribute to more active and versatile trade between neighbouring countries in such a complicated situation. Once Tbilisi initials the Associative Agreement/DCFTA, Armenia's cooperation with Georgia will acquire particular significance by giving Yerevan a common border with the EU customs zone. This factor will gain particular significance for Yerevan considering the quite ambiguous prospects of the EEU (especially with the current economic issues, western sanctions and catastrophic drop in oil prices).

Georgia takes a very clear position on Armenia's communication and transit connections with Russia and other countries of the EEU in the event that Armenia becomes a full member of that organization. To the extent possible, Tbilisi tries not to create political problems for Armenia (or for Russia). However, we cannot exclude that Tbilisi's position is in part defined by that of Brussels, which reckons that Armenia as an EEU member enjoying a preferential trade and customs regime with Georgia will make a much better partner to the EU, especially in the event of new dramatic developments in the former Soviet Union.

However, already in early 2015 we can expect to get a clearer idea of the prospects for Armenia-EU interaction formats under the new conditions. By that time, there will be full clarity, on the one hand, about the policy priorities of the new college of the European Commission in the former Soviet union (with the Ukraine crisis in the background) and, on the other hand, about the format of Armenia's membership in the EEU, allowing Yerevan and Brussels to define the framework and constraints of mutual cooperation.

### ***The NATO and the USA***

Armenia's cooperation with the NATO is defined in its National Security Strategy as the second element of the country's security system alongside membership in the CSTO and military-political cooperation with Russia. Even as a member of the CSTO and Russia's military-political ally, Armenia is almost on a par with neighbouring Azerbaijan in its relations with the NATO.

The reasoning behind this is primarily political. Based on domestic political parameters, Azerbaijan cannot compare to Armenia in the perception of NATO officials and governments of European NATO members, even considering the level of bilateral relations with key NATO countries, particularly the U.S., France and Greece. In terms of military cooperation with the Alliance, Armenia is also doing as well as Azerbaijan, including the goals attained this far, such as military-civic relations and civic control over the military. Amongst post-Soviet states, Armenia has the second largest number of NATO peacekeepers in Afghanistan, next only to Georgia. Naturally, the Turkish factor plays its negative role in the NATO, but it is compensated for by Armenia's advantages over Azerbaijan

This begs the question of Armenia's membership in the CSTO. Isn't it an impenetrable roadblock on the path to Yerevan's cooperation with Brussels? However, as long as the NATO is not institutionally present in the South Caucasus (it will not be until a decision is made about Georgia's membership), it appears that the CSTO will not hinder the development of Armenia's relations with the Alliance.

More importantly, in certain cases Armenia's membership in the CSTO and the strong Armenian-Russian military-political collaboration can even have a practical value in the regional priorities of the NATO, which time and again needs to find points of contact with Russia on issues of security in the former Soviet space. Indeed, this factor is entering into play right now, in the heat of the face-off between Russia and the West. The repeated postponement of a NATO Membership Program for Georgia is quite to Armenia's benefit. Clearly, in this situation it is easier for Armenia



to maintain a balance between the CSTO and the NATO, and between Russia and the West in the military-political sphere.

### ***A geopolitical triangle: Georgia-Turkey-Azerbaijan***

According to the National Security Concept adopted by Georgia in 2011, its relations with Azerbaijan are characterized as a strategic partnership (in contrast to relations with Armenia that are not defined in such terms). However, it is noteworthy that the strategic partnership with Azerbaijan is viewed by Georgia exclusively in the context of implementation of energy and communication projects. It is also interesting that in the same Concept, Turkey is defined as Georgia's leading partner in the region and a regional leader, relations with which are important for Georgia from the social-economical and military-strategic point of view<sup>1</sup>. This implies that that Azerbaijan-Georgia relations are in fact part of a trilateral format, Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan, in the realm of both politics and economics.

In its turn, according to the official and public perception in Armenia, Azerbaijan prioritizes relations with Georgia primarily as part of its strategy for the economic and communication strangulation of Armenia. The way it looks from Armenia, Azerbaijan uses its financial and economic levers to involve official Tbilisi and some strata of the Georgian society and political elite in anti-Armenian activity and propaganda. This defines the targeting of existing and planned energy and communication projects (BTC, BTE) as well as that of the intensive information and propaganda campaigns run by Azerbaijan's state bodies in Georgia's public and political realms.

There is also a number of still unanswered questions that are crucial to regional security in the context of bilateral Armenian-Georgian relations. For example, how will Georgia react in the event of resumption of military activity in Nagorno-Karabakh? Can Tbilisi preserve its positive neutrality the way Yerevan managed to do in August 2008? What can Tbilisi's position be in the event of positive developments in Armenian-Turkish relations, let alone the still hypothetical resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and normalization of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations? These are issues that will largely depend on the political environment.

### ***Possibility of trilateral cooperation with Iran***

Normalization of Iran's relations with the West, possible in the foreseeable future, in the event of progress concerning Tehran's nuclear program and lifting of the West's sanctions, will positively

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<sup>1</sup> National Security Policy of Georgia, [http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=12/](http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=12/)

affect trilateral Iran-Armenia-Georgia relations and have a general positive effect on the South Caucasus region, including in terms of commodity circulation, economic activity and Iranian investments. Some experts hope this may even enable Iran (as well as Armenia and Georgia) to implement new large-scale geopolitical and energetic projects.

Yet, even in the most optimistic case scenario, the prompt implementation of such large-scale regional communication or energy transit projects involving Iran, Armenia and Georgia is unlikely. Even if the sanctions are lifted and relations with the West normalized, it will hardly be possible to implement the project, sometimes mentioned by regional journalists and policy analysts, of an Iran-Armenia-Georgia gas pipeline stretching further on the Black Sea floor (not quite clear, via Ukraine or Romania) all the way to the EU.

According to some experts, such a project will face the issue of political and economical viability. From a political point of view, building an extremely expensive gas pipeline through Georgia's territory (with conflicts in Abkhazia and North Ossetia where Russian military bases are stationed) and further, across or along the coastal shelf of Crimea (in its current political and legal status) makes this project not less (if not more) vulnerable than the short and popular Turkish route. The economic viability of this project is highly questionable, and no credible feasibility studies have been published so far.

## ***Conclusion***

In general, vital internal and foreign political developments in the two countries and complicated regional processes in the South Caucasus and the entire former Soviet Union are now transforming the Armenian-Georgian relations, which have for two decades been based on a stable *modus vivendi* and productive interstate cooperation. At the same time, Armenia and Georgia have to travel a long path to reach the targets they set before them, and the mere prospect of a common path will allow Armenia and Georgia to establish new key political and economic relations in the South Caucasus.

# EXTERNAL FACTORS OF SECURITY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

By **George Tarkhan-Mouravi**, researcher,  
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## *Introduction*

Over the past two and a half decades that have passed since the collapse of the USSR, two small states of the South Caucasus lying on the periphery of Europe and Asia – Armenia and Georgia – in spite of their considerable similarity, have developed different political trajectories in terms of both internal processes and foreign policy orientations. This is reflected both in the specificities of ongoing domestic politics and in the nature of interaction with their geopolitical environment.

The legacy of the Soviet past – in the form of weak democratic institutions and political culture, along with manifestations of authoritarianism, repression, civil wars and ethno-political conflicts – continues to have negative impact on the political process, narrowing the field of political and social discourse and causing (although with different dynamics and to varying degrees) what is now called "competitive authoritarianism"<sup>1</sup> of hybrid regimes (to use the term proposed by Terry Lynn Karl back in 1995). While the formation of Western-style liberal democracy is still a relatively remote possibility here, both states have learned to imitate<sup>2</sup>, with varying degrees of skill, the formal aspects of democratic institutions.

At the same time, the pace of democratic reforms in these two countries varies. Differences are revealed in such policy categories as implementation of democratic freedoms, the nature of the business environment and the fight against corruption, and geopolitical orientations. In Georgia, there is a tendency for greater political change and development, whereas in Armenia, the same political regime has ruled for many years, and there is an acute problem of succession of power. As

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Levitsky, Lucan A. Way. 2002. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism". *J. of Democracy* 13 (2), 51-65. Also available online at [http://scholar.harvard.edu/levitsky/files/SL\\_elections.pdf](http://scholar.harvard.edu/levitsky/files/SL_elections.pdf); S. Levitsky, L. Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: international linkage, organizational power, and the fate of hybrid regimes*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Jonathan Wheatley, Christoph Zürcher. 2008. "On the Origin and Consolidation of Hybrid Regimes: The State of Democracy in the Caucasus". *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Volume 4, No.1, pp. 1-31. Available online at <http://www.tfd.org.tw/docs/dj0401/001-032-Jonathan%20Wheatley.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Dmitri Furman. 2008. „Imitation Democracies“. *New Left Review* #54, November-December. Also available online at <http://www.newleftreview.org/?view=2750>

a result, Georgia has made strides in democratic development, having carried out the change of the ruling elites by means of elections in 2012. However, there are still many other problems there, and the civil society in Georgia and the international community are concerned about not only cases of selective use of law, but also over incoherent foreign policy, the weakness of strategic planning and ineffective coordination between government agencies, and often behind-the-scenes approaches to making important government decisions<sup>1</sup>. There are also significant differences between the two countries in terms of security patterns, and these differences continue to increase as a result of diverging geopolitical orientations, and under the influence of the rapidly changing environment. Recently the corresponding processes have accelerated even further. In particular, developments in Ukraine, Russian annexation of the Crimea, and the resulting collapse of the system of European security and world order that had emerged after the end of the Cold War<sup>2</sup> have dramatically changed (and continue to modify) the security system of the South Caucasus.

### ***The role of geopolitical factors***

The influence of external factors, and in particular, of the geopolitical environment, often plays a significant role in determining both external and internal policies of small nations, especially located in the periphery of former empires or important geopolitical and geo-economic regions. Such influence may have various purposes and forms of expression, but often assumes the shape of pressure aimed at changing the system and principles of governance in a country, and sometimes even a radical change of a regime.

Let us consider the modes of external influence that external players active in the South Caucasus, for example, Russia, use to change (or sometimes to preserve) the *status quo*. In many cases, the recipient country exerts relatively soft pressure for regime change that has relatively moderate impact on political processes, but there can also occur quite strong pressures toward radical changes. Below we identify a number of modes of external influence, which can be used at different levels of a political process, although it is difficult to identify all the complex external factors that may lead to regime changes, as follows:

- Support for the stability of the incumbent regime by means of assistance, or the opposite, support for its weakening by means of sanctions and sabotage;

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<sup>1</sup> См.напр.: Kenneth S. Yalowitz, William Courtney, and Denis Corboy. “Rough and tumble building democracy in Georgia”. Wilson Center, November 2014. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/rough-and-tumble-building-democracy-georgia>

<sup>2</sup> Fareed Zakaria. “Russia endangering global order” [http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2014/03/31/zakaria-russia-endangering-global-order/?hpt=wo\\_r1](http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2014/03/31/zakaria-russia-endangering-global-order/?hpt=wo_r1)

- Promotion of norms affecting the attitudes and values, raising awareness of the population at large or its specific segments through educational and support programmes, mass media and other communication channels;
- Promotion and facilitation of the gradual change of regime by providing support (or promises of support) or integration on the basis of conditionality, or by threatening the withdrawal of support, or by influencing the preferences of ruling elites through mechanisms of pressure or encouragement;
- Offering a normative model of reforms;
- Support - during the ongoing change of a regime – provided to one of the rival parties, or to certain procedures of political change;
- Forceful implementation of a regime change, including in a part of the country's territory (through support of a conflict, annexation), conducting covert operations or so-called "hybrid warfare."

Some of these approaches have been used, with varying degrees of success, by the Russian Federation toward its neighbours, and in particular toward Georgia and Armenia, and – as is especially relevant today – toward Ukraine. Other approaches have been used by such actors as the U.S. and the EU, in particular, in support of democratization of the systems of governance, or in promoting free market principles.

It is interesting to pay attention to the channels through which the key actors present in the South Caucasus (Russia, US, EU, and to a lesser extent - Turkey and Iran) try to influence political developments in the region. Which of these channels of influence and to what extent will be used by external forces in order to achieve their goals, depends on the level of importance attributed to an issue or state in question, upon the level of respect for international law, international support for possible actions, available resources, internal popularity of an action, and, of course, upon the political tradition, but also on the nature of the goals to be achieved. Interpretation of the national interests of the ruling elites of a country defines such goals; the interpretation of respective interests, in turn, will depend on the dominant ideological paradigms, as well as on the state of democracy and domestic policy objectives of governments concerned<sup>1</sup>. It is also clear that the promotion of authoritarianism<sup>2</sup> is somewhat different from democracy promotion in most

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Walker. "Authoritarian regimes are changing how the world defines democracy". Washington Post, 06.12.2014. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/christopher-walker-authoritarian-regimes-are-changing-how-the-world-defines-democracy/2014/06/12/d1328e3a-f0ee-11e3-bf76-447a5df6411f\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/christopher-walker-authoritarian-regimes-are-changing-how-the-world-defines-democracy/2014/06/12/d1328e3a-f0ee-11e3-bf76-447a5df6411f_story.html)

<sup>2</sup> Rachel Vanderhill. *Promoting Authoritarianism Abroad*. Boulder, Colorado, 2013; Rachel Vanderhill. "Learning to Be Bad: How Autocratic Leaders Adopt Strategies from Abroad to Maintain Power". APSA Annual Meeting Paper, 2012.

parameters and approaches. Some of these above-listed approaches are modified when leadership changes, however in other cases the same government may go through a dramatic change in its official ideology and the approaches used, which is what we are now seeing in Putin's Russia.

Approaches applied by the main actors vary across the countries of the South Caucasus, and are subject to dynamic change. So, in the case of Georgia, Russia has relied mostly on military threats and on ensuring the continuation of conflicts, on applying economic sanctions and other "negative" leverage; while in the case of Armenia, its approach was more balanced and includes military and financial aid, but also taking control of the main economic assets and energy infrastructure, and the threat of reducing military support and security guarantees against Azerbaijan and Turkey, a sensitive issue due to the Karabakh conflict. The EU, in turn, relies heavily on the use of 'soft power': the attractiveness of its models and standards of governance; hopes for integration; provision of assistance; trade privileges; the prospect of visa facilitation; mediation, conflict resolution; ensuring security through the operation of observer missions; the conditionality of assistance and integration prospects. The United States also provide substantial economic aid but do not shy away from providing direct military assistance, and support closer integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Western soft power is particularly attractive for the liberal intelligentsia, but the attractiveness of its models of governance is much less among other segments of the population, who are more susceptible to propaganda based on ethnic nationalism, traditionalism or fundamentalist populism and may see Western influence in a less favourable light. Especially interesting are the regulatory aspects of soft power and in particular the democratic model of governance promoted in the South Caucasus. The U.S. and the EU are trying to promote democracy and the rule of law, although their regulatory models of development and social welfare are quite different, as are such issues as the legitimacy of political lobbying or pre-trial plea bargain. From a normative point of view, Russia is much less attractive, as it offers: "sovereign democracy," the suppression of freedoms, pervasive corruption, authoritarianism, and the domination of the Russian language, culture and interpretation of history. Therefore, Russia has to rely more on 'hard power' and punitive levers that can be effective in the short term but doomed to failure in the longer run.

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[http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2108791](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2108791); Gero Erdmann, André Bank, Bert Hoffmann, and Thomas Richter. *International Cooperation of Authoritarian Regimes: Toward a Conceptual Framework*. GIGA Working Paper, No 229, July 2013. [http://www.giga-hamburg.de/de/system/files/publications/wp229\\_erdmann-bank-hoffmann-richter.pdf](http://www.giga-hamburg.de/de/system/files/publications/wp229_erdmann-bank-hoffmann-richter.pdf)

## *Geopolitical threats and risks*

At the end of September 2014, Barack Obama, speaking at the opening of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, listed what he considers to be the main global security threats, and put the Russian aggression in Eastern Europe on a par with the Ebola epidemic and the 'Islamic state.'<sup>1</sup> Later he repeated this view at the G20 meeting in Brisbane, and once again called Russia's actions in Eastern Ukraine a threat to the entire world<sup>2</sup>.

One can agree or disagree with President Obama on his prioritization of the main global security threats, but the fact that the annexation of Crimea and the "hybrid" invasion of eastern Ukraine were indeed among the most important world events is difficult to deny, especially as the Ebola epidemic has been contained and is no longer a global threat. However, the newly aggressive Russia will undoubtedly continue to pose a security risk for regions such as the South Caucasus, particularly for Georgia.

Some months earlier, at the end of 2013, the security situation in the South Caucasus, in Europe and in the world was totally different from what one sees now. By starting the 'hybrid' war in Eastern Ukraine and by the forcible annexation of Crimea, Russia initiated the total collapse of the system of European security and world order that developed after the end of the Cold War, thereby upsetting the security balance in the South Caucasus.

Despite some disappointment in the West due to the fact that the political support during the 2008 war with Russia was seen as not fully adequate<sup>3</sup>, the foreign policy orientation of Georgia has not changed much even against the background of ongoing attempts to normalize relations with Russia. The Georgian government and society remain fully committed to Euro-Atlantic integration; along with Moldova and Ukraine, Georgia has recently ratified the Association Agreement with the EU<sup>4</sup>. The Association Agreement and the decisions on Georgia adopted at the

<sup>1</sup> «Эбола, Россия и боевики ИГИЛ — главные мировые угрозы, — Барак Обама (видео)». Великая Эпоха, 25.09.2014 <http://www.epochtimes.ru/ebola-rossiya-i-boeviki-igil-glavnye-mirovye-ugrozy-barak-obama-video-98941954/>

<sup>2</sup> «Обама вновь поставил Россию в один ряд с лихорадкой Эбола». Лента.ру, 15.11.2014. [http://lenta.ru/news/2014/11/15/obama\\_rus/](http://lenta.ru/news/2014/11/15/obama_rus/) Matt Siegel. "Russian aggression against Ukraine a threat to world: Obama." Reuters, 15.12.2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/15/us-g20-summit-obama-russia-idUSKCN0IZ05D20141115>

<sup>3</sup> Toomas Ilves / David J. Kramer. "We have allowed Aggression to stand". The American Interest, 22.12.2014. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/12/22/we-have-allowed-aggression-to-stand/>

<sup>4</sup> "European Parliament approves EU-Georgia association deal". European Parliament News, 18.12.2014. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20141212IPR01106/html/European-Parliament-approves-EU-Georgia-association-deal>

NATO summit in Wales in September 2014 pose serious risks to the security of Georgia, despite the fact that the threat of direct military action has apparently diminished lately.

However, recent developments in Ukraine are only too reminiscent of the Russian-Georgian war of 2008,<sup>1</sup> in particular, if we consider the war as punishment for pro-Western orientation, although one needs to take into account the fact that the Georgian leadership has provided a certain pretext for Russia that could serve as at least some justification for its actions. Nevertheless, on the fourth anniversary of the war, Russian President Putin admitted his personal responsibility for the preparation of war and the arming of South Ossetian militia, as well as for the actual order to launch an invasion<sup>2</sup>. Previous president and current Prime Minister Medvedev, in his speech to the officers of the Russian Southern Military District on 21 November 2011, also confirmed the presence of genuine geopolitical interests behind the Russian intervention<sup>3</sup>.

Of special concern to the Georgian society are recent Russian activities, and in particular, creeping annexation by of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, resulting from the signing in the first case,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Christoph Stefes. <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/aug/18/speakout-facing-russias-threat/>; Edward Lucas. *The New Cold War: Putin's Russia and the Threat to the West*. Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008, pp. 172-175, 2012: Roger E. Kanet, Maria Raquel Freire Key (eds.) *Players and Regional Dynamics in Eurasia: The Return of the Great Game*. 2010, pp. 32-37, 109-112.

<sup>2</sup> " Contrairement a ce qu'avait toujours prétendu Moscou - que l'offensive militaire lancée le 8 août 2008 n'avait été qu'une réponse à une attaque surprise de Tbilissi en Ossétie du sud 24 heures plus tôt - la guerre de Géorgie a été planifiée par l'état-major russe presque deux ans avant les événements. C'est Vladimir Poutine lui même qui vient de le confirmer à la télévision. «Il y avait un plan, ce n'est pas un secret... C'est dans le cadre de ce plan qu'a agi la Russie. Il a été préparé par l'état-major général, fin 2006 ou début 2007. Il a été approuvé par moi et convenu avec moi», a affirmé le président russe ...” Isabelle Lasserre. “Poutine reconnaît avoir planifié la guerre en Géorgie”. *Le Figaro*, 10/08/2012. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2012/08/10/01003-20120810ARTFIG00541-poutine-reconnait-avoir-planifie-la-guerre-en-georgie.php>

<sup>3</sup> “If we had faltered in 2008,” he [Medvedev] said, “geopolitical arrangements would be different now and a number of countries in respect of which attempts were made to artificially drag them into the North Atlantic Alliance would probably be [in NATO] now” ... “And for some of our partners, including for the North Atlantic Alliance, it was a signal that before taking a decision about expansion of the alliance, one should at first think about the geopolitical stability.” Quoted from: David Satter. *Russia's Looming Crisis*. FPRI, March 2012. p. 48. <http://www.fpri.org/docs/media/201203.satter.russiasloomingcrisis.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Dieter Boden. *The Russian-Abkhazian Treaty: New Tensions in the South Caucasus*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014 <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/11092-20141217.pdf>; Henry Kamens. “Treaty between Abkhazia and the Russian Federation is Revealing”. NEO, 12.12.2014. <http://journal-neo.org/2014/12/12/treaty-between-abkhazia-and-the-russian-federation-is-revealing/>; Томас де Ваал: новый Договор не является водоразделом в российско-абхазских отношениях. *Caucasus Times*, 17 Декабря 2014. <http://caucasustimes.com/article.asp?id=21391>; Арда Инал-Ипа. «Московский проект договора Сухум не устроил: В новой редакции документа о российско-абхазском союзничестве интересы Абхазии не защищены». *Независимая Газета*, 17.11.2014. [http://www.ng.ru/courier/2014-11-17/9\\_suhum.html](http://www.ng.ru/courier/2014-11-17/9_suhum.html); *Анаид Гогорян*. Арда Инал-ипа: «Недаром сегодня вспоминают события 1921 года». *Эхо Кавказа*, 24.11.2014 23:30. <http://www.ekhokavkaza.mobi/a/26708361.html>



and the preparation in the other,<sup>1</sup> of bilateral agreements that in fact legalize within the Russian legal space the ‘hybrid’ annexation of these internationally recognized regions of Georgia.

Another concern is the increasing deterioration of the situation and the risk of renewed large-scale conflict along the line of separation of the parties in the Karabakh conflict zone, which apparently is also associated with the tectonic changes in the overall geopolitical situation in the region, provoked by the Russia’s actions in Ukraine. Other common sources of tension have not disappeared either, but the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains one of the most explosive. On one hand, amid growing threats resulting from the revisionist policy of Russia all the traditional threats pale; but on the other hand, the conflicts could flare up again with renewed vigour due to efforts of all the same Russia.

In general, the world is becoming more unpredictable, and sources of instability continue to multiply: whether to recall the further expansion of the Islamic State; the uncertain future of Afghanistan and Syria; Iran's nuclear program;<sup>2</sup> Pakistan after the Peshawar tragedy<sup>3</sup>, the collapse of the state in the Horn of Africa, or the growing Chinese expansionism<sup>4</sup>. Even relatively predictable until recently, Turkey too began to introduce a significant element of uncertainty<sup>5</sup>. Even in Europe, there emerge new pockets of uncertainty, making its response to new security threats quite hard to predict<sup>6</sup>.

Of course, one should not underestimate the threat posed by the actions of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and, in particular, the risk of instability coupled with the prospect of return of the Caucasian combatants from there back to their homeland. However, this threat is predictable, thus the South Caucasian states should be able to take certain preventive measures in order to reduce

<sup>1</sup> «Проект договора между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Южная Осетия о союзнничестве и интеграции». <http://www.iron-akcent.ru/index.php/glavnaya-tema/485-proekt-dogovora-mezhdu-rossijskoj-federatsiej-i-respublikoj-yuzhnaya-osetiya-o-soyuznichestve-i-integratsii>; Петр Козлов. «Силловые структуры Южной Осетии и России объединятся». *Ведомости*, 25.12.2014. <http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/37829741/fsb-prisoedinit-kgb>

<sup>2</sup> Michel Rocard. *Iran in the Middle*. Project Syndicate 10.12. 2014. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/iran-nuclear-shia-awakening-by-michel-rocard-2014-12>

<sup>3</sup> Brahma Chellaney. “Pakistan’s New Leaf?” Project Syndicate, 22.12.2014. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/pakistan-jihadist-terror-support-by-brahma-chellaney-2014-12>; Shahid Javed Burki. “Pakistan After the Peshawar Massacre”. Project Syndicate, 19.12.2014. <http://project-syndicate.org/.../taliban-military>

<sup>4</sup> Minxin Pei. “China’s Asia?” Project Syndicate, 03.12.2014. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/asia-for-asians-political-rhetoric-by-minxin-pei-2014-12>

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Finkel. “From democrat to autocrat: NATO ally turns back on group’s ideals”. Reuters blog, 22.12.2014. <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2014/12/22/from-democrat-to-autocrat-nato-ally-turns-back-on-groups-ideals/>

<sup>6</sup> Joschka Fischer. “Europe’s Make-or-Break Year”. Project Syndicate, 24.12.2014. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/eu-greece-presidential-election-nationalist-revival-by-joschka-fischer-2014-12>; *The EU and the East in 2030: Four Scenarios for Relations between the EU, the Russian Federation, and Common Neighbourhood*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/11088.pdf>

the possible consequences. At the same time, the risks emanating from Russia are almost impossible to predict, and their possible scale is not even comparable with the modest capabilities of the South Caucasus states, and, in particular, of Georgia.

### *Russia factor*

As already noted, in the past few years the Russian leadership has not only started to act more aggressively in its foreign policy and to disregard international law<sup>1</sup>, but it also began to back such actions by a certain ideological framework, previously observable in the more inconsistent and fragmentary form. A new ideological paradigm came to dominance<sup>2</sup>, claiming Russia's special responsibility for the ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking population in neighbouring countries ("Russian World" and "gathering of the Russian lands"); return to Russian religious orthodoxy and "traditional values" (e.g. homophobia), as opposing the "moral degradation" of the West; Russia's return to superpower status ("getting up off its knees") and the opposition to the US global domination, continuously trying to weaken and humiliate Russia<sup>3</sup>; assertion of the idea of the Russia's "special path" rooted in the concept of Eurasianism; "correcting injustice" of recent decades, linked to the expansion of NATO<sup>4</sup> and the EU to the East; promoting the idea of "special interests and rights" of Russia in its "near abroad", i.e. in the post-Soviet space. In recent years there has been a sustained effort by Russia to support and preserve authoritarian regimes in its "near abroad", as according to respective line of argumentation being surrounded by authoritarian regimes reduces the risk of infection by 'colour revolutions'; in addition, such regimes are easier to manipulate, and they serve as a useful buffer separating Russia from democratic Europe or other unwanted neighbours.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Lucas. Deception: Spies, Lies and How Russia Dupes the West. 2013. Peter Pomerantsev, Michael Weiss. *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money*. The Interpreter. 2014.

[http://www.interpretermag.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The\\_Menace\\_of\\_Unreality\\_Final.pdf](http://www.interpretermag.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The_Menace_of_Unreality_Final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g. Lilia Shevtsova. "Putin Doctrine: myth, provocation, blackmail, or the real deal?" <http://www.the-american-interest.com%2Farticles%2F2014%2F04%2F14%2Fthe-putin-doctrine-myth-provocation-blackmail-or-the-real-deal%2F&h=uAQEPzA3v>; Игорь Зевелев. *Новая внешнеполитическая доктрина России*. *Ведомости* 4/8/2014

<http://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/news/24981841/novaya-vneshnyaya-politika-rossii?full#cut>

<sup>3</sup> Вероника Крашенинникова: "Стратегия экономического и финансового уничтожения России" — дубль 2. РИА Новости, 09:0722.12.2014. [http://ria.ru/cj\\_analytics/20141222/1039537389.html](http://ria.ru/cj_analytics/20141222/1039537389.html) ; Fyodor Lukyanov. *Russia's Asymmetrical Response: Global Aikido*. In: Paul J. Saunders (ed.) *Costs of a New Cold War: The U.S. - Russia*

*Confrontation over Ukraine*. Center for the National Interest, September 2014. Thomas de Waal. "Regime Change Divides East and West." Carnegie Moscow Center, December 17, 2014. <http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=57535>; Dmitri Trenin. The End of Consensus. <http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=57511>

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Grove. Russia says NATO turning Ukraine into 'frontline of confrontation'. Reuters, 24.12.2014 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/24/us-ukraine-crisis-russia-nato-idUSKBN0K20J920141224>

Ideological frameworks of Russia's policies are formed by the complex mixture of internal problems and rampant populism, with anti-Western, nationalist-imperialist vision of the 'great power' ('derzhavnost') status and "neo-Eurasianism" à la Alexander Dugin<sup>1</sup>. As a result, Russia has become a key source of security threats that extend also to the South Caucasus. The main threats emanating from Russia do not originate from its North Caucasus as some Russian experts trying to present but rather in the 'tough' Kremlin's policy, threatening European and international stability<sup>2</sup> - as it began to move along the path indicated several decades ago by Alexander Solzhenitsyn<sup>3</sup>: assemble lands and territory that in institutionalised Russian nationalist outlook<sup>4</sup> are considered to make the 'Russian world' (*Russkiy mir*), and then, probably, restore some kind of USSR-2 under the slogans of the Russia's 'special path' and 'traditional values'<sup>5</sup> (as opposed to those prevailing in the decadent West) instead of now outdated communist mottos.<sup>6</sup>

Russia's actions are difficult to predict due to the additional fact that very often decisions are made there under the influence of various irrational factors<sup>7</sup>. Russian writer Vladimir Sorokin, well versed in the domestic politics of the country and a rare voice of dissent, admitted to be at a loss, unable to understand Putin's intentions: "The unpredictability has always been a hallmark of Russia; however, since the Ukrainian events it has increased to an unprecedented level: no one

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Dugin is a rather influential partisan of Russia's imperialist futures and neo-Nazi 'traditionalism.' He is a professor at the Moscow State University and Advisor to the General Staff. See: Антон Шеховцов. *Палингенетический проект неоевразийства идеи возрождения в мировоззрении Александра Дугина*. Форум новейшей восточноевропейской истории и культуры, 2, 2009. стр. 105-126. <http://www1.ku-eichstaett.de/ZIMOS/forum/docs/forumruss12/7Shekhovtsov.pdf>. For Dugin's recent activities see.: Matthew Campbell. "Rise of the new Russian empire". Searchlight Magazine, 20 April 2014.

<http://searchlightmagazine.com/news/international-news/rise-of-the-new-russian-empire>

<sup>2</sup> Back in 1946, George Kennan wrote in his "Long telegram": "At bottom of Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs is traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity. ... And they have learned to seek security only in patient but deadly struggle for total destruction of rival power, never in compacts and compromises with it. Full text at

<http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Aleksander Solzhenitsyn. *Rebuilding Russia: Reflections and Tentative Proposals*. Harvill Press, 1991 (first published in Komsomolskaya Pravda, September 18, 1990).

[http://www.kulichki.com/inkwell/text/hudlit/ruslit/solzheni/kak\\_obustroit.htm](http://www.kulichki.com/inkwell/text/hudlit/ruslit/solzheni/kak_obustroit.htm)

<sup>4</sup> For details see.: Igor Zevelev. "The Russian World Boundaries. Russia's National Identity Transformation and New Foreign Policy Doctrine." *Russia in Global Affairs*, 7 June 2014. <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-Russian-World-Boundaries-16707>

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Blank. "Russia's Lurch toward Fascism". : [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-blank/russias-lurch-toward-fasc\\_b\\_5169230.html#es\\_share\\_ended](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-blank/russias-lurch-toward-fasc_b_5169230.html#es_share_ended)

<sup>6</sup> Lilia Shevtsova. "Putin Doctrine: myth, provocation, blackmail, or the real deal?" <http://www.the-american-interest.com/%2Farticles/%2F2014/%2F04/%2F14/%2Fthe-putin-doctrine-myth-provocation-blackmail-or-the-real-deal/%2F&h=uAQEPzA3v>

<sup>7</sup> "Russia's actions in Ukraine, while still in full swing, signal nothing less than the maturing of a new and interventionist strategy. Resembling the original Brezhnev doctrine, the Kremlin seems fully resolved now to interfere with any of its post-Soviet neighbors, should they chose a political model at home or affiliations abroad that differ from what Moscow proposes: autocracy from within, and Eurasian integration from without." Joerg Forbrig. "Crimea crisis: Europe must finally check the Putin doctrine". *CNN*, March 14, 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/14/opinion/ukraine-russia-putin-doctrine-joerg-forbrig/index.html>

knows what will happen to our country during the next month, week or just a day after tomorrow."<sup>1</sup> The Russian leadership seems to be willing to sacrifice long-term national interests only to achieve some short-term geopolitical benefits and increased popularity rating<sup>2</sup>. As recently noted Joseph Nye, the hunt for such short-term benefits, along with other unreasonable actions, brings in the risk of the long-term loss of soft power<sup>3</sup>. However, the immediate risks to regional, but also to global stability, emanating from Russia, are currently extremely high. <sup>4</sup>

One should expect that in spite of the devastating effect of sanctions<sup>5</sup> on its economy<sup>6</sup>, coupled with the downfall in oil prices<sup>7</sup> and the weakening of its position and credibility both in Europe<sup>8</sup> and in the world<sup>9</sup>, Russia will continue to use its still considerable power and influence in the South Caucasus, where it will be able to either direct countries in the region in the way that corresponds to its perceived interests, or will use all available means to destabilize disobedient

<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Sorokin. "Let the Past Collapse on Time!" *The New York Review of Books*. 8 May 2014. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/may/08/let-the-past-collapse-on-time/>

<sup>2</sup> John Lough. "Putin's High-Risk Game in Ukraine". Chatham House, 14 April 2014

[http://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/199034?dm\\_i=1TYG%2C2DDIW%2CBLOKNG%2C8LVFL%2C1;](http://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/199034?dm_i=1TYG%2C2DDIW%2CBLOKNG%2C8LVFL%2C1;) David Ignatius. "The cost of Putin's adventurism in Ukraine": [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-the-cost-of-putins-adventurism-in-ukraine/2014/04/15/f31efed0-c4ce-11e3-b195-dd0c1174052c\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-the-cost-of-putins-adventurism-in-ukraine/2014/04/15/f31efed0-c4ce-11e3-b195-dd0c1174052c_story.html) ; Loren Thompson. "Perils Of Empire: Five Ways Putin Hurt Russia By Grabbing Crimea". *Forbes*, 11 April 2014.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2014/04/11/perils-of-empire-five-ways-putin-hurt-russia-by-grabbing-crimea>

<sup>3</sup> Joseph S. Nye. "Putin's Calculus." <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/joseph-s--nye-asks-whether-russia-s-short-term-gains-in-ukraine-will-be-worth-the-long-term-loss-of-soft-power> ; Joseph S. Nye. "Putin's Rules of Attraction". <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/putin-soft-power-declining-by-joseph-s--nye-2014-12>

<sup>4</sup> John R. Schindler. Beware Putin's special war in 2015. XX Committee, 24.12.2014.

<http://20committee.com/2014/12/23/beware-putins-special-war-in-2015/>; Stephen Sestanovich / Bernard Gwertzman.

Where Is Putin Leading Russia? <http://www.cfr.org/russian-federation/putin-leading-russia/p33926> ;

<sup>5</sup> Sanctions. *Russian Analytical Digest* No. 157, 2014.

[http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/DetailansichtPubDB\\_EN?rec\\_id=3180](http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/DetailansichtPubDB_EN?rec_id=3180) ; Петр Казначеев. Санкции замедленного действия, или Россия в нефтяной ловушке. *Slon*, 12.12.2014.

[http://slon.ru/economics/sanktsii\\_zamedlennogo\\_deystviya\\_ili\\_rossiya\\_v\\_neftyanoj\\_lovushke-1194826.xhtml](http://slon.ru/economics/sanktsii_zamedlennogo_deystviya_ili_rossiya_v_neftyanoj_lovushke-1194826.xhtml) ;

<sup>6</sup> The Russian Economy. *Russian Analytical Digest* # 160, 2014.

[http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/Russian\\_Analytical\\_Digest\\_160.pdf](http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/Russian_Analytical_Digest_160.pdf) ; Matt O'Brien. "Sorry, Putin, Russia's Economy Is Doomed." *The Washington Post blog*, 15.12.2014.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/12/15/russias-economy-is-doomed-its-that-simple/> ; Paul Krugman. "Putin's Bubble Bursts." *The New York Times*, 18.12.2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/19/opinion/paul-krugman-putins-bubble-bursts.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/19/opinion/paul-krugman-putins-bubble-bursts.html?_r=1)

<sup>7</sup> Shaun Walker. "Why the Russia's Oil Crash Would Threaten Putin with Palace Coup". *The Guardian*, 21.12.2014.

[www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/21/vladimir-putin-russia-oil-prices-power-oligarchs&h=nAQHsOOBg](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/21/vladimir-putin-russia-oil-prices-power-oligarchs&h=nAQHsOOBg) ; Anatole Kaletsky. "The reason why oil could drop as low as \$20 per barrel." *Reuters*, December 19, 2014. <http://blogs.reuters.com/anatole-kaletsky/2014/12/19/the-reason-oil-could-drop-as-low-as-20-per-barrel/>

<sup>8</sup> Judy Dempsey. "Germany is Europe's New Frontline". <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=57464> ; Hans Kundnani. "Leaving the West behind". *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2015.

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142492/hans-kundnani/E2%80%A8/leaving-the-west-behind>

<sup>9</sup> Jorge G. Castañeda. "Why Cuba Turned". Project Syndicate, 19.12.2014. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/cuba-us-diplomatic-relations-embargo-oil-prices-by-jorge-g--casta-eda-2014-12>

regimes<sup>1</sup>. Now, after the seizure of Crimea, Moscow apparently will no more shy away from the direct use of force in violation of international norms and agreements, in cases where it is deemed appropriate to achieve its geopolitical goals<sup>2</sup>. Peter Doran, director of the research programs of the Center for European Policy Analysis in Washington, and co-author of a recent report on security problems of Central and Eastern Europe, writes: "Crimea has changed the world. The treaties—the U.N. Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Budapest Memorandum, the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the Russo-Ukrainian Treaty of 1997—that created peace in Europe for the past 20 years have been called into question by the invasion and annexation of Crimea. Georgia was the first sign that Vladimir Putin is a revisionist. Then came Ukraine. What will the third country be?"<sup>3</sup>

After the annexation of Crimea the attention of international observers shifted toward the South-Eastern Ukraine<sup>4</sup>. It was assumed that Russia's actions in Ukraine<sup>5</sup> would help to identify both the direction of its future actions, and the international response to them; however, the process got stuck there and may develop into a chronic form, as it has been in the Caucasus. The new version of the Cold War looms on the horizon, and even the likelihood of a new full-scale war is sporadically discussed<sup>6</sup>. Currently, the region is in a situation of rapidly changing security environment and the eroding applicability of international law<sup>7</sup> – as the *Anschluss* of Crimea was followed by the outbreak of hostilities in the Eastern Ukraine – and against the backdrop of a weak response by the international community<sup>8</sup> there is absolutely unpredictable prospect of growing

<sup>1</sup> Александр Мурунсон. "Путин активизируется и на кавказском направлении."

<http://novosti.az/expert/20140409/300178127.html>

<sup>2</sup> Karmo Tüür, Viacheslav Morozov (eds.) *Russian Federation: Short Term Prognosis*. University of Tartu, 2014.

<http://www.ut.ee/ABVKeskus/sisu/prognoosid/2014/en/pdf/RF2014.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> "CEPA's Director of Research Peter B. Doran comments on changes to the European security order."

<http://cepa.org/content/cepas-director-research-peter-b-doran-comments-changes-world-order>

<sup>4</sup> *Eastern Ukraine: A Dangerous Winter*. International Crisis Group, Europe Report N°235 | 18 December 2014.

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/ukraine/235-eastern-ukraine-a-dangerous-winter.pdf> ; "Russian Foreign Policy and the Ukraine Crisis." *Russian Analytical Digest* No. 158, 2014

[http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/DetailansichtPubDB\\_EN](http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/DetailansichtPubDB_EN)

<sup>5</sup> Daniela Schwarzer, Constanze Stelzenmueller. "What is at Stake in Ukraine". GMFUS, 13 March 2014.

<http://www.gmfus.org/archives/what-is-at-stake-in-ukraine/>

<sup>6</sup> Edward Lukas. "I hope I'm wrong but historians may look back and say this was the start of World War III". *Daily Mail*, 15 April 2014." <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2605578/Edward-Lucas-I-hope-Im-wrong-historians-look-say-start-World-War-III.html> ; Илья Крамник. Война приходит без приглашения: Прекращение диалога России и НАТО грозит миру крупнейшей военной катастрофой. 25.12.2014 <http://lenta.ru/articles/2014/12/24/warfuture/>

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey D. Sachs. "Ukraine and the Crisis of International Law." <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/jeffrey-d-sachs-sees-in-russia-s-annexation-of-crimea-the-return--with-us-complicity--of-great-power-politics#FgUCQYAcxcAorAXY.99> ; Fareed Zakaria. "Our new international tension is global norms vs. national interests"

*The Washington Post*, 10 April 2014. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fareed-zakaria-our-new-international-tension-is-global-norms-vs-national-interests/2014/04/10/0bbcd68e-c0f0-11e3-bcec-b71ee10e9bc3\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fareed-zakaria-our-new-international-tension-is-global-norms-vs-national-interests/2014/04/10/0bbcd68e-c0f0-11e3-bcec-b71ee10e9bc3_story.html)

<sup>8</sup> Ivan Krastev. "Putin's World". 1 April 2014. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ivan-krastev-blames-the-west-s-weak-response-in-crimea-for-empowering-russia>

expansionism, revanchism and revisionism of the Russian leadership acting often within irrational policy framework implemented by strictly personalized small group of people.

### ***Conclusion***

Current political processes in the South Caucasus clearly demonstrate the difficulties of post-communist transition in complex geopolitical environments. The current situation in the region is characterized by a high level of uncertainty and volatility, and unpredictability of the geopolitical environment. Russia remains here still the most powerful player, and, on the one hand, its action is often impossible to predict with any certainty, but on the other - it is ready to ignore any international norms or their own laws when it comes to what its leadership believes (or claims) to represent national interests. In such circumstances, the soft power of the West is too slow and insufficient, while the modest incentives of rather remote Euro-Atlantic integration are not sufficient to promote democratic change and to counterbalance the serious threat of Russian expansionism and revanchism. The political leaders of the South Caucasus countries bear the heavy responsibility for the future – and they must realize that the world order is changing rapidly, and should be prepared for a long and dangerous new ‘cold war’ between Russia and the West, which gets they inevitably involved in one or another way. In order to avoid the impending security risks and threats arising from the gaining momentum of existing confrontation, they will need great political skills and determination.

# IN SEARCH OF THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARMENIAN-GEORGIAN COOPERATION WITHIN THE GLOBAL SECURITY FRAMEWORK

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## *Summary*

The present paper explores the prospects for cooperation between Georgia and Armenia in the area of foreign and security policy. The main focus of the study is on the global level security frameworks of cooperation where both countries participate. In particular, we have studied the voting practice of Georgia and Armenia at the United Nations General Assembly (UN GA) and voting results on resolutions submitted to the UN GA by UN committees. The results of statistical analysis of the voting database enabled us to single out the priorities of the foreign and security policies of UN member states in question, and to determine dynamics of cooperation between them.

The outcomes of the analysis show that the global and multilateral cooperation frameworks provide Georgia and Armenia, the closest neighbours in the South Caucasus region, an opportunity to make independent decisions and pursue national interests; besides, the two countries managed to remain committed to universal values, and, at the same time, respond to the challenges they face. These frameworks also provide opportunities to Georgia and Armenia for finding mutually beneficial areas for cooperation and supporting peace and regional security in the South Caucasus region.

## *1. Introduction*

We present here the results of the analysis of long-term statistical data from the UN GA voting records, comparing the voting practices of Georgia, Armenia, their regional neighbour states and other nations having economic and political interests in the South Caucasus region<sup>1</sup>. The following

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on the statistical analysis of a database of votes recorded by the first Committee at the UN GA. For this paper, 289 votes have been collected and analyzed, covering 12 years out of a 16-year period, from #53 in 1998 to #68 in 2013. The database covered recorded votes of 19 countries, including the South Caucasus states and countries that have close ties with them: US, UK, France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Poland, Russia, China, Japan, Turkey, Iran, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia

factors have been taken into account during the research: voting behaviour of the members of different international organizations, such as the EU and the CIS; the influence of national interests of individual UN members on their voting practices. In particular, we have reviewed the influence of Georgia's and Armenia's national interests on the implementation of their foreign and security policy priorities during voting at the UN GA.

It should be taken into account that UN GA resolutions are not legally binding and that their political power cannot be compared with the decisions of the UN Security Council. The resolutions adopted at the UN GA have only recommendation power, though monitoring of the voting practice over the resolutions adopted at the UN GA could provide an opportunity to portray the level of foreign policy cohesion between countries. The voting practice of Georgia and Armenia could determine their common values and principles, which could help identify additional areas of cooperation between them in the field of foreign and security policy.

Similar studies have been carried out from the 1950s onward, aiming at understanding the specifics of a state's foreign policy or defining the level of cohesion of foreign policy courses among the members of the UN<sup>1</sup>. These types of studies have used statistical methods and examined the resolutions adopted by the UN GA for a certain period of time. Quantitative research methodology makes it possible to give a clear picture of state's behaviour not so much at one point in time, but to observe the voting practice of states during a long period of time and identify changes that take place in the relationship between the states. This is the first time when a study focuses on the voting behaviour of the South Caucasus states and their regional neighbours and strategic partner states.

The presented analysis is an attempt to explore and determine the level of the states' commitment to their core national values, and the level of cohesion between the national values of different states. For example, the study defines the level of commitment of Georgia to its Euro-Atlantic integration, examines foreign policy priorities and principles on which Georgia bases its voting behaviour, the main topics of disagreement between the choices made by Georgia and its regional partners during the UN GA votes on resolutions. Besides, the research results attempt to evaluate the so called voting distance existing between Georgia and its close partner states, and the so called "EU consensus", and define factors explaining existing difference in the voting practices of various states. Applied methodology makes it possible to enlarge the scale of the quantitative study and include voting data for other states. The paper discusses foreign policy priorities of

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<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues. "The Fifteen and the Accession Foreign Policy in the UN General Assembly: What Future for European Foreign Policy in the coming together of the 'Old' and 'New' Europe", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Volume 9, Issue 1, Spring 2004



Georgia and Armenia, and evaluates similarities and differences in voting behaviours of nations at the UN GA.

## ***2. Voting Record of Georgia and Armenia at the United Nations General Assembly - continuation of Foreign Policy***

The official policy documents of Georgia and Armenia in the area of foreign and security policies declared peaceful and fair settlement of conflicts to be a key priority. Accordingly, Georgia and Armenia share some foreign policy priorities, reflected in the main policy documents such as national security concepts<sup>1</sup>, foreign policy visions<sup>2</sup> etc. However, the main principles, based on which it could be possible to develop various options for conflict resolution, differ fundamentally.

The basic principles of peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia include the recognition of territorial integrity of the state, its de-occupation, and implementation of the politics of non-recognition of territories occupied by Russia in 2008. Armenia's approach in interpretation of the main principles of the same priority is fundamentally different. According to Armenian officially declared goals, the main principle for peaceful conflict resolution is granting the right of self-determination to the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Therefore, the country supports the self-determination principle, which is formulated in the United Nations Charter (Article I) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as a right of "all peoples", found also in some other international documents<sup>3</sup>.

The existing difference in underlying principles of the states' foreign policy priorities has its impact on the choices of Armenia and Georgia during voting in the UN GA on resolutions related to the conflicts in the South Caucasus states – Georgia and Azerbaijan.

As practice shows, Georgia and Armenia support opposite decisions when the GA discusses resolutions on Georgia and Azerbaijan. They demonstrated different positions in 2013 when the UN GA reviewed the resolution on Abkhazia. During the voting, the United States, EU member states, Azerbaijan, Iran, Moldova, Ukraine and other states supported Georgia's decision, while Armenia together with Russia and Belarus voted against the resolution. Similar practice was observed during voting on resolutions on the same topic in 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009 and 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> Website of National Security Council of Georgia: [www.nsc.gov.ge](http://www.nsc.gov.ge)

<sup>2</sup> Website of the Ministry of Foreign Policy of Armenia: <http://www.mfa.am/en/foreign-policy/>

<sup>3</sup> The right to self-determination of peoples is recognized in many other international and regional instruments :the UN General Assembly in 1970, 2, the Helsinki Final Act adopted by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975, 3, the CSCE Charter of Paris for a New Europe adopted in 1990, 5, and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of 1993.

Meanwhile, in 2008, Georgia voted against the UN GA resolution on the right of Karabakh people to self-determination. This resolution was supported by Armenia and Russia, but not Georgia, and proved once more that in the area of conflict resolution Georgia and Armenia adhere to different principles; these two states cannot be expected to find common ground on the issue in the years to come.

However, Georgia and Armenia are not quite consistent in upholding their foreign policy principles. During the voting on UN GA resolutions other than discussed above, there has been little consistency in their voting practice.

For example, while discussing UN GA resolution on the Request of an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on whether the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo is in accordance with international law (8 October 2008, (A/RES/63/3) ) Georgia and Armenia abstained alongside some members of the EU. Such a decision means that Armenia joined neither the group of states who voted in favour of self-determination like the US, nor Russia in its vote against the resolution. Georgia also abstained from supporting its declared principle during this vote. Another tendency observed while analysing the voting behaviour of states is related to the limited number of convergence between positions of Russia and Armenia, on the one hand, and Russia and Georgia, on the other, or even Russia and the other CIS member countries. The statistical analysis of voting at the UN GA on resolutions shows that in 1998-2013, decisions made by the former Soviet republics in the UN GA were not influenced by any particular state, i.e. the CIS member states were making mostly independent decisions.

On the basis of the above observations, we can conclude that the behaviour of Georgia and Armenia during the voting at the UN GA does not express a strong commitment but rather, an indifference to pursuing their declared principles. Both Georgia and Armenia could abstain from expressing their position on controversial resolutions the way other countries do: Turkey, Kazakhstan, China, etc. A similar approach was demonstrated by Armenia in 2008 when it abstained to vote in favour of the resolution on Kosovo. In the future, in order to enable deeper cooperation between the two states, Armenia and Georgia may need to change the existing practice and refrain from voting against each other.

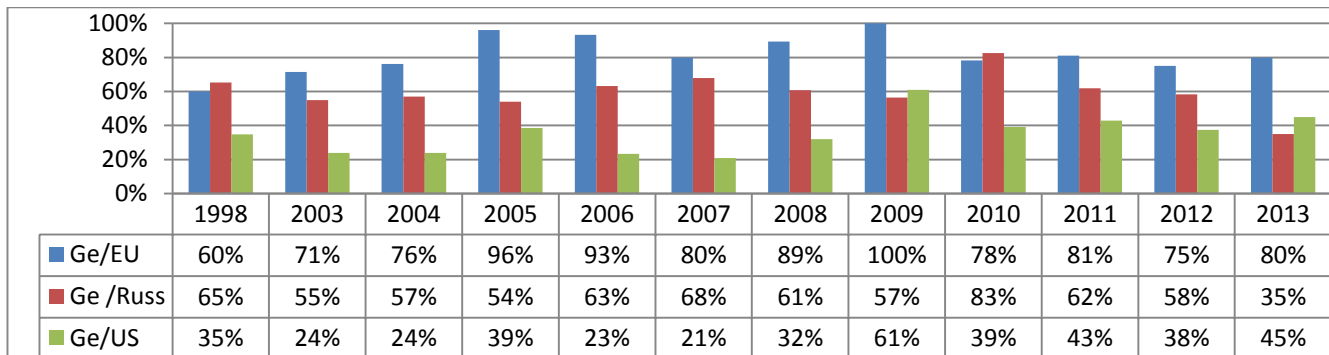
### ***3. Voting behaviour of Georgia and Armenia and other states at the UN GA: Results of the analysis***

The results of the statistical analysis show that the voting behaviour of Georgia and Armenia is similar to consensus voting common amongst EU member states. Here the term consensus

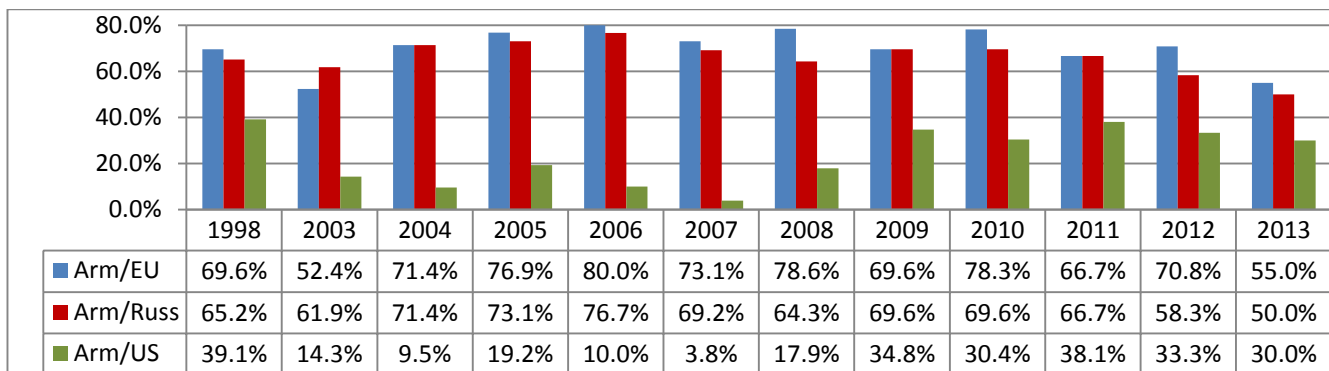
voting refers to the core EU member states that almost always cast consolidated votes at the UN<sup>1</sup>. According to the same sources, since 1979 this core group has included all the founding members of the EU, except France and the UK<sup>2</sup>.

Graphs 1 and 2 show that during 1998-2013 the level of convergence of Georgia's vote with that of the EU was the highest at 83% average (even attaining 100% in 2009). Data indicate that Georgia's voting at the UN was characterized by coherence with the EU consensus member states, and prove that Georgia's policy choices resemble primarily those of the EU consensus. Contrastingly, convergence between the voting patterns of Georgia and Russia is much lower, averaging at 62%. The analysis also shows a low level of convergence between voting by Georgia and by the U.S., which is understandable, because the U.S. voting pattern differs from that of other states, making it an outlier within the dataset.

**Graph 1: Convergence of Georgia's voting: with the EU, Russia, and the US**



**Graph 2: Convergence of Armenia's voting: with the EU, Russia, and the US**

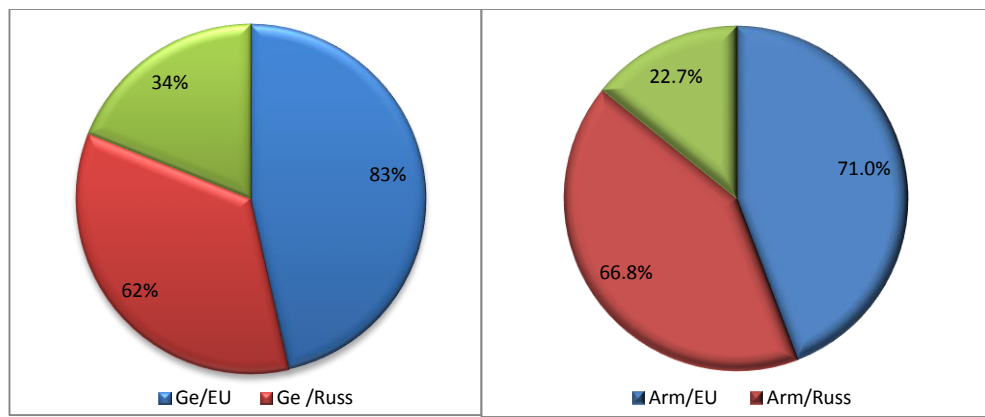


<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues. "The Fifteen and the Accession Foreign Policy in the UN General Assembly: What Future for European Foreign Policy in the coming together of the "Old" and "new Europe", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Volume 9, Issue 1, Spring 2004.

<sup>2</sup> "They (core group) were lately joined by Denmark, Greece, Portugal and Spain. Among the neutral countries, Finland is closest to this core, whereas Ireland has offer been rather distant from it. But the most characteristic feature is the particular position of France and the UK (as a nuclear states and permanent members of SC, TP), as since the mid 90s they have been further away from the EU majority than any other EU country" - Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues. "The Fifteen and the Accession Foreign Policy in the UN General Assembly: What Future for European Foreign Policy in the coming together of the: "Old" and "new Europe", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Volume 9, Issue 1, Spring 2004

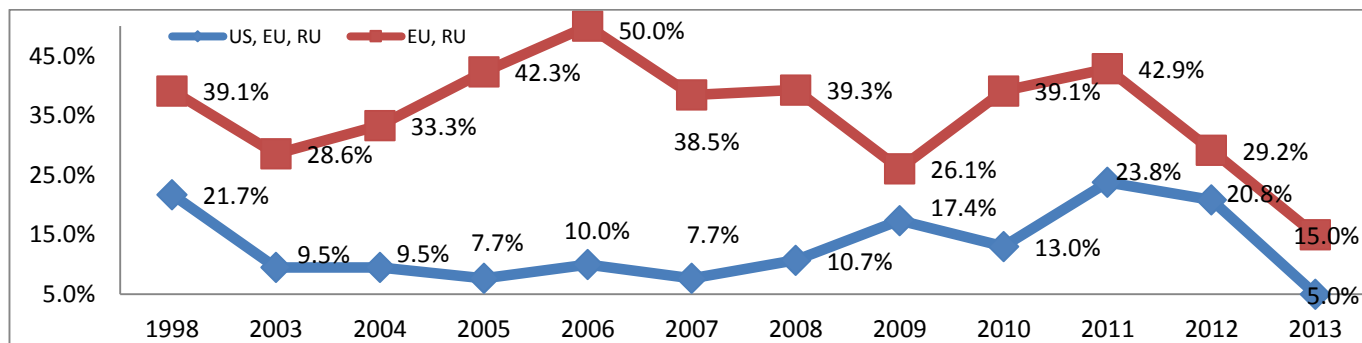
Armenia's voting choices at the UN indicate that the level of convergence between Armenia and the EU, on the one hand, and Armenia and Russia, on the other, look quite similar to those of Georgia. Similarly, the level of convergence between Armenia and the US is also quite low, once again underlining the special status of the US among the UN members states and its special power and influence over processes in the realm of global security. It can be well explained within the concept of realism in international relations<sup>1</sup>. Comparison also proves that there are few significant differences between the foreign policy choices of Armenia and Georgia, as both countries shared the positions of EU members states more often than those of Russia.

**Graph 3: Cohesion of voting by Georgia and Armenia with the US, EU and Russia**



In the context of trends described above, it is interesting to review the voting data of the EU, Russia and the US during 1998-2013 and evaluate the level of coherence between choices made by these states. Previous academic research on the voting behaviour of UN members states has shown that in the early 90s, Russia's voting practice moved closer to that of the EU, while in the early 2000s, the distance increased. As it shown in Graph 4, compared to the end of the 1990s, the cohesion between the voting of Russia and the EU positions decreased by a factor of 2 by 2006 and by a factor of four by 2013.

**Graph 4: Cohesion between EU/EU/RU, and EU/RU**



<sup>1</sup> Erik Voeten. "Clashes in the Assembly", *International Organizations* 54, no 2, Spring (2000): 185-215.

Graph 4 also shows that the level of cohesion between the decisions made at the UN by the US, the EU and Russia is much lower than that between the EU and Russia. Besides, the overall level of consensus on resolutions submitted to the UN GA by the First Committee significantly decreased towards the end of the observed period. Amongst resolutions submitted by the First Committee (focused on disarmament and international security), not a single one thus received full support from the voting member states in 2013, while in previous years it was typical for 2 to 4 resolutions to be approved unanimously.

Moreover, according to Graphs 1 and 2, cohesion between Georgia and the EU remained above 80% during 1998-2013, while that between Georgia and Russia significantly decreased from 81% to 50%. As to Armenia, its voting cohesion with both the EU and Russia decreased during the same period.

In sum, Graph 4 shows the decreased level of cohesion between Russia and the EU, and Russia and the US, reflecting current developments in the international arena and the resulting increase in the number of instances when these states have diverse and even opposite positions. One should expect the behaviour of these states at the UN to continue diverging.

Modern research on this topic shows that the core EU member states remain committed to multilateralism in international relations, and no dramatic change can be expected in their voting patterns. In its voting, the core EU group supports global security institutions and decisions of the United Nations, the central institution in the system of international relations<sup>1</sup>.

According to the concept of realism in the theory of international relations, states should respond to ongoing changes in the international arena by reviewing their national goals and threat assessments, sometimes bringing changes into bilateral relations between states, which could be already seen in the decisions made at the UN after 2013.

For example, the following developments will necessarily influence UN GA voting behaviour of the South Caucasus countries and their neighbour/partner states:

1. Annexation of the Ukrainian Crimean peninsula by Russia and its actions in eastern Ukraine have ensured that the US and EU members states supported economic sanctions against Russia;
2. Strengthening of NATO's capacity to defend its Eastern European members has been re-established as a priority goal for the first time in many years;

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<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues. "The Fifteen and the Accession Foreign Policy in the UN General Assembly: What Future for European Foreign Policy in the coming together of the 'Old' and 'New' Europe", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 9, no 1, (2004)

3. After a decade of discussion without action, the EU made the decision to develop a consistent energy policy in order to reduce its dependence on Russian gas and oil supplies;
4. The US is now likely to become an energy exporter, competing with Russia for a market share;
5. The West views the ongoing war in Ukraine as a source of constant turmoil and contested sovereignty, which would make the situation similar to other so-called “frozen conflicts” in Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan, left over from the breakup of the Soviet Union but never officially resolved<sup>1</sup>.

Based on the above, we can surmise that should the conflict between Russia and Ukraine persist, Russia may be expected to try to review its bilateral relations with Georgia and Armenia and increase pressures on the two countries during voting at the UN, thereby constraining their political options.

Some scholars have analyzed the correlation between the voting behaviour of a state at the UN GA and the quality of its democracy<sup>2</sup>. These studies explore the hypothesis that regime type affects the behaviour of a state in general and its voting practice in particular. As a rule, this implies that democracies are able to agree on such topics as human rights, fundamental freedoms and economic liberalism, creating the moral foundation for peace.

This hypothesis can be applied to the voting behaviour of European democracies. However, analysis of the dataset of UN GA resolutions cannot help us assess the level of democracy in any country including Georgia or of Armenia. Further research would be necessary. The existing data makes it possible to observe similarities in the voting behaviour of Georgia and Armenia with the EU, Russia, the US and other countries but cannot be used to evaluate how committed are Georgia or Armenia to democracy and liberal values, since their voting behaviour lacks consistency and is poorly predictable.

## ***Conclusions***

The paper explores the prospects of cooperation in the area of foreign and security policy between Armenia and Georgia. The findings of the study are in line with the results of already conducted studies on the voting behaviour of the EU members, as well as China, US, and Russia at

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<sup>1</sup> Michael McFaul, “Putin the (Not So) Great”, Politico magazine, August 4, 2014, [http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/putin-the-not-so-great-109711\\_Page2.html#.VJsfasAKY](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/putin-the-not-so-great-109711_Page2.html#.VJsfasAKY)

<sup>2</sup> Erik Voeten. “Clashes in the Assembly”, *International Organizations* 54, no 2, Spring, (2000): 185-215. Jack Snider. *Myths, Modernization and the Post-Gorbachev World*. In *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War*, edited by Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, (1995): 109-26. New York: Columbia University Press

the UN General Assembly<sup>1</sup>. It is the first time that the voting behaviour of the South Caucasus states has been observed and analysed with the use of the same methodology. The findings can contribute to the improvement of cooperation between Armenia and Georgia in the area of foreign policy.

- In recent years the number of cases of coherent voting by Armenia and Georgia with Russia decreased, and it is expected that this trend will last. In case of continued conflict with Ukraine, Russia can mobilize its political resources and increase pressure on Georgia and Armenia at the UN, thus limiting their political options.
- Provided Georgia and Armenia remain loyal to the universal values and commitments undertaken within the framework of cooperation with global structures and organizations, this could make a positive impact on bilateral cooperation between them; abstaining from voting on sensitive conflict issues could contribute to further augmenting cooperation opportunities between two countries.
- Cooperation in the field of global security enhances the regional security system of the South Caucasus on the basis of mutual trust and confidence building; it includes successful cooperation in the framework of the initiatives related to global arms control, elimination of nuclear and chemical weapons, ban of the use of biological weapons, anti-personnel mines, small arms and light weapons, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Erik Voeten. "Clashes in the Assembly", *International Organizations* 54, no 2, Spring, (2000): 185-215; Jack Snider. "Myths, Modernization and the Post-Gorbachev World". In: *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War*, edited by Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, (1995): 109-26. New York: Columbia University Press; Splidsboel Hansen Fleming. "China, Russia and the Foreign Policy of the SCO", *Connections, the Quarterly Journal* 11, no 2, (2012): 95-102; Elisabeth Johansson-Nogues. "The Fifteen and the Accession Foreign Policy in the UN General Assembly: What Future for European Foreign Policy in the coming together of the 'Old' and 'New' Europe", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 9, no 1, (2004).

# SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF ARMENIAN FOREIGN POLICY

*By David Petrosyan,  
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## *Introduction*

The situation in the sphere of global policy and security during 2014 has been highly volatile and disturbing, worse ever been since the ending of the Cold War. It was caused by a clash between the main power centres - Brussels, Washington and Moscow - for influence over the former Soviet Union. As proved by history, at times like this the major players are absolutely merciless not only towards each other, but also towards small and medium countries. It is at times like this that local or world wars begin, genocides and ethnic cleansings are perpetrated, borders change, whole states collapse or even disappear.

The global architecture and the rules of the game are changing, calling for an adjustment of the Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations. In the 1990s, the Western states started to dismantle it in former Yugoslavia (the point of no return for this process became the recognition of Kosovo's independence by most Western countries and their allies), and this process still continues in Ukraine.

The Ukraine crisis affected other regions of the former Soviet Union, including the South Caucasus. The geopolitical impact of events in Ukraine has reached the countries of the Black and Caspian Sea regions. Ukraine's position and size leads to the projection of certain processes onto the geopolitical field around it. Practically, the divide between two geopolitical projects – the Western and the Russian one – runs across Ukraine's territory, through Donbass and Crimea.

A similar confrontation is happening in the region of the former Transcaucasus, but in a different form, because this region has three internationally recognized states (Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, all gravitating towards different security systems), two partially recognized (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and one unrecognized de-facto state (the Nagorno-Karabakh). Also, in contrast to Ukraine, the region is the object of contention for Iran and potentially even China as well as Russia and the NATO countries (primarily the U.S., Turkey, the United Kingdom and countries of continental Europe).



## ***A. Relations with Russia and the EEU***

The conflict between the main world centres of power in the framework of the Ukraine crisis can lead to tectonic shifts in the former Soviet Union. In the context and logic of this process, small countries will enter a more intimate engagement with the major players that concentrate power, possess nuclear weapons and can guarantee security. Armenia is such a small country. Its involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and unregulated relations with Turkey will induce it to enter a more intimate relationship with Russia in the event of a global predicament. Although formal support from Moscow is quite predictable, right now Russia tends to rely on itself alone, which is why even its closest partners (Belarus and Kazakhstan) will be careful when it comes to offering support and will most probably distance themselves from Moscow with respect to some political issues.

In principle, the general public and most of the expert community in Armenia perceives the current policy of the Armenian authorities with understanding. Arguably, this course of action reduces the mobility of Yerevan's foreign policy on the international level, but in return, it offers a certain level of security.

The decision to join the EEU was in many ways contrary to Armenia's economic interests; however, this was also true for the three-year-long DCFTA negotiations. By the end of 2013, the trade turnover of Armenia with the outside world was quite diverse. Here are some statistics:

- The main trading partner of Armenia was Russia, accounting for 22.6% of the export and 24.8% of the import,
- Armenia exported 27.1% of its goods to CIS countries, 33.4% to EU countries and 39.5% to other countries,
- The main export partners of Armenia in the EU were Bulgaria (10.3%), Belgium (8.9%), Germany (5.8%) and the Netherlands (4.5%).

This general picture lacks many important details, primarily ones about "other countries" (first of all, Georgia, Iran, Turkey, the U.S., China, the UAE and Switzerland).

What will Armenia receive from the EEU in economic terms?

- it will get a 30% discount on the global price of gas and oil,
- by various estimates, it will get from 150 and up to over 200 million dollars in revenues from the 1.13% of the overall amount of customs duties of the EEU, significantly exceeding the current revenues of Armenia's own customs,

However, significant reorganization and demonopolization of Armenia's economy is required for success. Otherwise, membership in any economic union will prove ineffective. The supporters of European integration need to be aware of the following important circumstances:

- most technical regulations of the EEU are either very close or identical to EU, or can be easily brought in line with them,
- the economies of EEU member states are tied to Europe, and these ties will deepen. The situation is strained because of the Ukraine crisis but it cannot stay like that forever. If it gets worse, which can happen, it will affect Armenia negatively. Any improvements will affect Armenia positively,
- various officials from Moscow and Brussels, including senior ones, clearly state that the idea of "Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok" has not been discarded but temporarily put aside. In that context, once the chain of major cataclysms is over, partnership between the EU and the EEU can become a realistic project and Armenia can be its full-fledged participant.

### ***B. Prospects of the European dimension***

In 2014, there was a dry spell in the relationship between Brussels and Armenia. In reality, it began after the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius, when it became obvious that the DCFTA program for Yerevan had failed. The current silence, sometimes broken by statements of European bureaucrats at various levels, is a rather logical sabbatical, tied to a number of factors, including:

- the EU itself was changing in 2014,
- the Eastern Partnership project was on Brussels' agenda during the year but was not prioritized. One of the reasons is that in 2014, the EU was presided over by Greece and Italy, countries much more interested in the implementation of Brussels policy in the South/Mediterranean direction,
- the priority of the Eastern Partnership program will increase with the presidency of Latvia in the EU starting on January 1, 2015. The Eastern Partnership has already been defined in Riga as the "number one priority" of the country's presidency in the EU,
- various groups of countries in the EU have different visions of the strategy and tactics in the framework of the Eastern Partnership program. Outwardly, the Old Europe is passive and indifferent to this program, and is so far checking it out. Baltic countries and former socialist states are much more active and dynamic in this program.

The think-tanks in Brussels and in countries supervising the Eastern Partnership program (Poland and Sweden) will in all likelihood propose a new program of cooperation with Yerevan by

January 1, 2015 (the beginning of Latvia's presidency), separating it from the group of countries that have ratified the DCFTA. The issue of Armenia's membership in the EU will not be discussed so as not to strain the already complicated relations with Moscow.

It is quite possible that in Armenia, most EU programs will be reoriented towards the youth and the student community. The reorientation will aim to support the civil society, and, accordingly, NGOs, which are the nuclei of future political processes.

At the same time, the Western centres of power, i.e. Brussels and Washington, stress their relationship with Armenia as a unique partner of the NATO which is also a member of the CSTO; a party in conflict which maintains its alliance with Moscow but continues to cooperate with the West. Predictably, this policy will be developed or at least preserved at the current level. However, under the conditions of confrontation between global players, it will not be easy to do.

### ***C. Resolution of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh***

From the day of independence, the main issue of Armenia's foreign policy has been the resolution of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. What new trends were noted in the negotiation process itself and in the developments around it? The following points can be highlighted in the context of strife between major power centres:

- in the framework of its policy of containing Moscow, the U.S. is concerned that Russia may try to monopolize conflict resolution efforts, of which the OSCE Minsk Group is currently in charge. Avoiding direct conflict with Russia within the OSCE Minsk Group, Washington will attempt to activate negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh on other platforms, outside of the Minsk Group, possibly even bringing representatives of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic back to the negotiations table (such a model is being tested in London under the auspices of International Alert). This will enable the U.S. to successfully compete with Russia for a negotiations format outside of the OSCE Minsk Group,
- elements of this policy were visible during the last visit of the American co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group James Warlick to Yerevan in September 2014. Some quotes from his speech confirms this hypothesis, at least indirectly, "...There should be an official negotiating process. The sides should decide how it should proceed, and we are prepared to support them. We don't want to predetermine the final result, but we want a process that would result in the problem's resolution". Warlick also noted that it is time to conduct negotiations in another direction and meetings at the level of presidents or foreign ministers are no longer sufficient,

- with the full support of its European partners, Washington is making systematic steps towards forming a mixed expert and public (non-governmental) platform, the participants of which they will pick themselves, sifting them through a mesh of workshops and conferences. On this platform, they will try to formulate provisions relevant to the six conditions earlier mentioned by Warlick as having been discussed at the Carnegie Endowment. It is possible that later these provisions will be used to force the parties in conflict to make decisions. This approach can be illustrated by a meeting of NGO representatives from Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh held in November 2014 in Helsinki in the framework of an “independent civil peace process.”

Clearly, adherence to declarations adopted by some NGOs in Helsinki will not lead to positive change in the negotiation process as long as one of the fundamental demands of the OSCE is not met: to refrain from the use of force or any threat thereof. It is necessary to get the parties in conflict to fully maintain the ceasefire as prescribed by the 1994 Moscow agreements and corresponding resolutions of the UN Security Council. The following steps may help:

- to return to the February 6, 1995 Agreement on strengthening the cease fire in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, initiated by the Russian and Swedish co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. Negotiations for implementation can also be started, perhaps in a different format than stipulated by the agreement. Since some key conditions of the cease fire are not observed, i.e. the parties do not refrain from the use of force or threats thereof, any discussions about signing the Madrid Principles or still less an Agreement on Cessation of the Armed Conflict will remain mere discussions,
- to try to re-establish the practice of meetings between defence ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Such meetings were last held in 2008 in Bishkek on Russian initiative, on the margins of a meeting between CIS defence ministers, and in 2006 in the Gazakh-Ijevan territory on the initiative of Andrzej Kasprzyk, Personal Representative of the Minsk Group Chair. Both times, they discussed measures to maintain the ceasefire. Back in the 1990s and in the early of the 2000s, such meetings had been quite regular.

### ***D. Relations with Georgia***

The relations with neighbouring Georgia are very important for Armenia. Georgia has ratified the DCFTA agreement and is building up the Western vector of its policy. The following important trends in the Armenian-Georgian relations were observed last year:

- the presidents and prime-ministers of Armenia and Georgia have exchanged visits during which they discussed and coordinated the vectors of the two countries' integration models,
- at negotiations and the top-level meetings, the two countries have expressed mutual interest in implementation of energy projects,
- the two countries have begun discussing the implementation of infrastructure projects (including opening the railroad via Abkhazia).

In the context of developments in the former Soviet Union, Yerevan may constantly have to deal with the formal/informal four-country GUAM block, with three members of which Armenia has no problems in bilateral relations (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine). However, all the countries of this block will vote against Armenia at international forums (UN, OSCE, PACE, Euronest etc.), and Armenia will vote against them.

In recent years, regardless of the political forces in office in Yerevan and Tbilisi, they have been aware that the current situation has, perhaps temporarily, left them on different sides of a geopolitical barrier. However, there is a clear trend that the two countries will do everything possible to sustain their traditionally and historically good bilateral relations, maintain strong links and contacts in the areas of economy, culture, trade, tourism, humanities etc, and engage in constant political dialogue and consultations (including between experts). This model works well for Armenia-Georgia relations, and everything must be done to develop it further while minimizing the interference of third parties into the bilateral relations (such attempts at interference will doubtless take place).

### ***E. Relations with Iran***

As to bilateral Armenian-Iranian relations, they have been stagnating for two years now. Yerevan has been carried away by integration projects with Brussels and Moscow, and it is partly what brought about the stagnation of the bilateral relations with Iran. In the meantime, after the victory of Hassan Rouhani in the 2013 presidential elections, the situation around Iran has changed a lot. The bilateral relations of Tehran and Washington have entered a stage that can, with reservations, be defined as decisive. The president of the U.S. has offered Iran, once a compromise is reached concerning Iran's nuclear program, to normalize bilateral relations and begin a common struggle against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

A question of fundamental importance for Armenia is what awaits it in the event of normalization of American-Iranian relations. This answer to this question lies in two spheres: military-political and economic. In terms of politics and security, normalization of the Iranian-

American relations will minimize chances of an armed conflict between them, which fully corresponds to Armenia's interests. In the economic sphere, all depends on whether, after normalizing relations with Washington, Tehran will continue to support those countries which are of low economic interest to it but are instrumental to projects ensuring the regional political balance. Such projects include the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline, the railroad via the Syunik marz in Armenia, new high voltage lines and the hydro-electric power station in Meghri in southern Armenia. There are no final answers to these questions, and there may never be unless the Armenian foreign policy becomes more interested and active in the southern dimension.

### ***F. Armenian-Turkish relations***

Armenia-Turkey ties have not been normalized and the land border remains sealed. In the current situation, we need to revisit the wording of the five-year-old Armenian-Turkish protocols, signed in Zurich in the presence of the high and mighty but still not ratified. In all likelihood, they will stay that way, and basically, a new process has to be started. It is obvious that Armenian-Turkish rapprochement is in Armenia's interests and it is also obvious that it cannot be achieved by means of the Zurich protocols.

The reason is that the intermediaries had simultaneously implemented two different processes into the protocols: normalization and reconciliation. Meanwhile, reconciliation is the much more complicated and long-term process of the two. In new negotiations, this mistake must be understood and avoided. However, given the current state of affairs in the South Caucasus and the Middle East in general, a fresh start cannot be expected soon. Once in a while, Armenia's president Sargsyan makes unexpected and ambiguous statements in connection with the approaching 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. However, the implementation of these statements, for example, the arrival of Turkish President Erdoğan to Yerevan for the commemoration ceremony, will not change a lot in the political reality.

# “POSTMODERN CONDITION” OF INTERNAL POLITICS IN GEORGIA

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Assessing the current state of internal politics in Georgia requires a brief retrospective of the political experience of post-Soviet Georgia.

Until 2012, power in post-Soviet Georgia remained monolithic, homogeneous. However, monolithic power does not always mean strong power. Homogeneity (or totality) actually refers to the structure of power: indeed, the governance systems of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili were monolithic in the sense that their constituent subsystems and institutional substructures were only formally autonomous.

However, such uniformity conditioned a vertical style of governance, concentrated power in the hands of the leader of the government (i.e. political leader) and strengthened the belief **that there was no possible alternative to this leader in the society**. The political images of all three political leaders (Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze, Saakashvili) had messianic angles, and all cultivated this image.

Their political regimes have sought the universalization of power, achieving political and party-related influence in all areas, which called into question the fundamental principle of democracy: the separation of powers.

This situation has had a number of consequences, including: authoritarian harmonization or, rather, merger of legislative, executive and judicial branches of power, often expressed in secret deals between them and their movement in the same direction; fast adoption of strategic policy decisions, not subject to revision; marginalization of political opposition; marginalization of the third sector.

Such authoritarian political regimes would coexist with three contrasting paradigms: a) In the Gamsakhurdia era, it was ethnic nationalism; b) under Shevardnadze, it was the rationalization of governance; c) when Saakashvili came to power, it became the modernization of Georgia. Despite

the fundamental differences between these three paradigms, they still share one factor: usurpation of power and rejection of ambivalence, i.e. differences.

Of course, in terms of objective results, the paradigm of modernization was the most successful one: the modernization of Georgia was aimed at combating corruption, neutralizing crime, reorganizing infrastructure, and so on. However, the "big goals" of modernization obliterated individuals interests and human rights, including economic and fundamental democratic rights: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of choice, etc.

Implemented in a spirit of **dehumanization**, the idea of modernization ultimately created the political and social field in which Saakashvili's power was defeated.

In 2012, Georgia subjected to fundamental political re-design: the political coalition called "The Georgian Dream" that came to power consisted of ideologically diverse political entities. The constituting parties were all united by certain strategic values (e.g., foreign policy priorities, including a Western orientation and a course for membership in international organizations), but their main rallying point was an apparent "negative mobilization", i.e. opposition to the Saakashvili regime.

The political eclecticism of the current ruling elite lead to the purely symbolic possibility of a single unrivalled political leader. Bidzina Ivanishvili was the uniting actor of the opposition movement, due to the sizeable social capital that he earned by his magical invisibility<sup>1</sup> and charitable deeds of the past, and, naturally, also due to his huge financial capital that the impoverished and marginalized opposition of those days needed like a fish needs water. However, with Ivanishvili's advent to power (and his activity as a political figure) his symbolic magical capital started to fade, slowly but persistently. The same process began within the Georgian Dream coalition as well as in the society at large. This was well understood by Ivanishvili himself; by stepping down from his post, he further accelerated the de-legitimization of the concept of absolute political leadership. **What we have today is a simulacrum in place of an uncontested political leader.** Many infer that Georgia is still ruled by Ivanishvili but as an informal shadow figure. However, paradoxical as it may sound, this is precisely the whole meaning of the political hyper-reality, simulation and absurdity: **the ruler is the one who cannot rule, because one cannot rule** in a rational way from the couloirs, without everyday contact with the particulars of current politics. Thus the boundary between real and virtual governance becomes erased.

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<sup>1</sup> Until 2011 when Ivanishvili entered politics, he never appeared at public events or in media coverage. Georgian citizens did not know what he looked like, just that he was a philanthropist.



Meanwhile, Irakli Garibashvili appeared unable to turn into an uncontested political leader. There were many reasons for this; one was the Ivanishvili figure lingering in the background, acting as a political "parent" or "prompter", impossible to get rid of.

**It may sound paradoxical, but it is the "postmodern condition" of domestic politics in Georgia that serves as the most powerful source and indicator of the anti-authoritarian nature of current political reality.**

In the post-Saakashvili era, the Georgian Dream coalition encountered two major challenges:

- a) preservation of the main achievements of the National Movement, and
- b) correcting the major failures of the previous government.

The answer to the question whether the new government has coped successfully with these challenges is rather "yes" than "no". In terms of the preservation of basic achievements, one should mention the following: preservation of non-corrupt situation in social institutions, effective functioning of public services, preservation of anti-crime policies (including the continued policy of repressing the 'thieves-in-law'), and so on. Now, with regard to the correction of the major mistakes of the previous government, it should be noted that the new government rejected maintaining of tight control over mass media, unconditional subjugation of the judiciary, monopolizing of the electoral environment, the practice of torture and inhuman treatment of prison inmates previously prevailing in the penitentiary system, and the use of brute force to dispel opposition rallies; the harshness of criminal legislation was reduced (e.g. the barbaric principle of "cumulative sentencing" was abolished), and in general, domestic policies became more humane.

On the other hand, the incumbent government (just as previous ones) was unable to resolve the most pressing social problems faced by the population, such as unemployment and poverty. Approximately 39-41% of the population is unable to secure even the subsistence level of livelihood (which for a working adult is calculated at approximately 160 GEL per month), and the nominal unemployment rate is 16-17%, excluding the large number of unemployed people who got tired of the fruitless search for a job, as well as those formally considered to be self-employed.

It should be noted that the ruling coalition achieved such positive results under the conditions of an eclectic political makeup, which is the internal modus operandi of this political force. Although its political heterogeneity makes the ruling coalition quite fragile, it is this fragility and closeness to break-up that creates the possibility of democratic governance and fundamental impossibility of the usurpation of power. A seemingly strange situation has been created: the steps taken by the Georgian Dream toward more homogeneity, i.e. toward getting rid of internal

opponents, have not made it any stronger, but rather, weakened it. This happened when the coalition was left by Irakli Alasania and his party (the Free Democrats). Despite the fact that the parliamentary majority immediately and painlessly managed to fill the gap with members of other parliamentary factions, from my point of view, this change has reduced the public legitimacy of the coalition.

It is in a similar context that one should consider the figures of the president and the speaker of the Georgian parliament. Giorgi Margvelashvili and Davit Usupashvili were seen by the ruling political force as potential insiders, provided the practices of the previous government remain in place in the form of a political triumvirate: the president, prime minister and speaker of the parliament. Fortunately, this did not happen; both the president and the speaker of the parliament remained faithful to the democratic mechanism of separation of powers (this was manifest recently in its most conspicuous form during the discussion of the bill on covert surveillance).

It is interesting to note that once a more or less popular political force leaves the coalition, it is not likely to become marginalized, but rather, stands good chances of becoming a so-called "third force", the demand for which is growing in the society. As can be seen from sociological surveys conducted during the last year, while the National Movement remains the main opposition political party in the country, the number of voters that would support it is not increasing but vacillating around 20% against the backdrop of a growing number of people who are disgruntled and frustrated by the ruling coalition. It is the disgruntled voters that create the social niche with the potential to legitimize a new, 'third' political force. Georgia will have its next parliamentary elections in 2016. It is highly unlikely that any completely new political force, unknown to society, will suddenly become popular. Therefore, the third force could only represent a new configuration of existing political forces. A group with this kind of novelty about it is Irakli Alasania's party, just recently spun off from the ruling coalition.

One should also note the very important and positive role of civil society organizations (the so-called "third sector") in the construction of domestic politics in Georgia. It's safe to say that the third sector undertakes the role of the opposition in matters relating to the protection of fundamental human rights, media freedom and other democratic values. The fact is that criticism of the authorities in terms of the above values coming from the National Movement does not sound credible (or rather, sounds like a joke), because it was exactly the protection of human rights that was the weakest point of the previous government. Therefore, it is crucial that this function has been taken over by the third sector.

# ARMENIA'S DOMESTIC POLITICS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGION

*By Alexander Iskandaryan,*

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Armenia's domestic politics in last few years has represented a classic development of what is known as a "one-and-a-half party system", when only one party possesses real power, has majority in the parliament and can control the national policy without paying attention to the opposition. However, the system still cannot be called single-party; opposition parties continue to operate, and, more importantly, all somewhat significant parties are represented in the parliament but have almost no influence on political decision making. The opposition is divided and weak, which allows the ruling Republican party to ignore it. This arrangement is similar to classical examples of Mexico from the 1920s to the 1990s during the reign of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or Japan from the 1950s to 1990s during the rule of the Liberal Democratic Party.

Armenia hasn't always been like that. More importantly, the development of this system is still in progress, it is not yet "set" and continues to take shape right in front of our eyes. A multi-party system was active in Armenia from the first days of independence in 1991, and even earlier, during the last years of the formal existence of the Soviet Union. A dominating party has always been present: at first it was the Armenian National Movement and later the Republican Party. However, there were other parties, often harshly opposing the authorities, sometimes dangerous for them. During the rule of the president Serzh Sargsyan, this system slowly began to take its current shape: the ruling party has entirely lost its ideological component and has treated the opposition as less and less of a threat.

The 2012 parliamentary election was crucial to the forming of a new elite consensus. Although in the South Caucasus it is usually the presidential, not the parliamentary election that defines the country's future, in 2012 it wasn't the case for Armenia (or for Georgia). The parliamentary election defined the outcome of the presidential election and signalled the transition to a new domestic policy format. The previous format was generated in the highly special atmosphere of 2007-2008, when power was shifting from the second president of Armenia Robert Kocharyan to the third, Serzh Sargsyan. This process was marked by severe rivalry during the parliamentary elections and bloody clashes after the presidential elections. The results of that election cycle were polarization

of the society, preservation of wide social discontent and a deformed political system. The opposition was barely represented in the parliament, even while the potential of the social and political discontent was huge: in the 2008 presidential elections, around 40% of the votes were cast for two candidates with a harsh anti-governmental ideology, Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Arthur Baghdasaryan. Obviously, since the elections and the clashes on March 1st, 2008, the Armenian regime has not gained any supporters. The economic recession followed by stagnation and absence of substantial economic growth has also increased social tensions. And yet, during all these years no political forces have been able to redirect the discontent into a political movement. The non-parliamentary opposition radicalized the political rhetoric to the level of almost absolute rejection of the entire political system. Given that it was forced out of the political system, the opposition had no other choice: the rejection was mutual.

The result of the May 6, 2012 parliamentary elections was a serious reformatting of this model. For the first time in the history of the Republic of Armenia, all significant political parties made it to parliament. The Republican Party won an absolute majority: 69 seats out of 131 (40 out of 90 elected by party lists and 29 out of 41 in single-mandate constituencies). The Prosperous Armenia Party led by Armenia's richest businessman Gagik Tsarukyan won 37 seats (28 via party lists and 9 in single-mandate constituencies). The Armenian National Congress, led by the first president of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan, managed to win 7 seats. The Rule of Law Party, Dashnaktsutyun and Heritage each won 5 seats via party lists, and Rule of Law won another seat in a single-mandate constituency.

The number of mandates they now had allowed the Republicans to independently control the parliament, however, they entered a coalition with the Rule of Law Party, which acted as its spoiler in the election. This decorative arrangement was revoked in 2013 when Rule of Law left the coalition and the Republicans officially began to rule alone.

However, the presence of the political opposition in the parliament creates certain new rules of the game: politics are moving from the streets into the parliament, thus ridding the streets of opposition activity. This actually leads to the marginalization of the opposition and rifts within it; opposition figures are losing the glory of radical fighters, and society is becoming fully aware of their inability to truly stand up to the authorities. As a result of the 2012 elections, two mutually opposing changes took place in Armenia. On the one hand, the polity became more plural, on the other, the ruling Republican Party managed to level out the influence of all main political opponents.

The radical rhetoric that is in such high demand in the Armenian political culture becomes much less convincing when used by politicians and political forces that participated in the elections and are now in the parliament. Opposition politicians still accuse authorities of mass election fraud and insist that not just the elections but the whole pyramid of power is absolutely illegitimate. The difference is, first, that these accusations have become part of the parliamentary discourse, and second, that they are increasingly perceived as hypocritical.

The demand for radicalism remains high but the supply is wearing thin. This gap is increasingly filled by the so-called civic activism, chiefly in the form of street protests, which are not organized by political forces but by networks positioning themselves as civil society and protests as non-political. The causes for these protests vary from environment to architecture; however, the protests themselves have all the characteristics of political activity. The issues do not necessarily directly concern the activists, chiefly recruited from the same social group (youths, students and residents of the social centre of the capital city). In all, it is still a small group probably numbering several thousand. The group has no defined hierarchy but rather, several hierarchies that flow into one another. The group is amorphous but there is a more or less constant nucleus of the most dedicated activists. This phenomenon is quite new for Armenia and appears to be directly connected to the degradation of the traditional forms of opposition politics.

Protests against unfairly made fortunes, the merger between business and politics, and the corrupt nature of large business, are typologically similar to the rhetoric of the New Left in Europe and Latin America. It is unlikely that the activists themselves have any awareness of such similarity, since the genesis of this phenomenon is purely domestic. However, the birth of this movement signals the emergence of a left-wing discourse, which had been almost nonexistent in Armenia since independence. For now, the New Left in Armenia is very weak; the protests are confined to a tight social circle and it is unlikely that they will leave its boundaries in the nearest future.

It is easy for the authorities to deal with these protests by giving in at the right moment in issues that they consider to be of little importance. Yet, because the protests are political by nature and have a mobilization base which does not depend on specific issues, the protests are likely to rise again and again, each time for a new cause, and may even pay the way for the emergence of new forms of political activism. Currently, there is no established hierarchy amongst the protesters, their expert capacity is primitive, the movement is not structured. Instinctive “groping” in search of social and even semi-communist rhetoric is not yet sufficient for a cumulative effect that would enable the protest to detach itself from its narrow social and ideological base.

In the interval between the parliamentary and presidential election, the next stage of the political struggle unfolded. It happened entirely behind-the-scenes and was focused on preventing the only candidate that could become a more or less serious and systemic competitor to Serzh Sargsyan from running in the presidential elections. The potential competitor was Gagik Tsarukyan, leader of Prosperous Armenia, the party with the second largest faction in the parliament. Lacking a clear ideology, Prosperous Armenia fought the Republicans in the parliamentary election with their own tools and techniques: paternalistic rhetoric and financial incentives ranging from direct gifts to voters to investments in the social sphere. Right after the presidential election, it appeared quite realistic for Tsarukyan to become the center of attraction for the country's opposition forces, including existing and latent ones. Tsarukyan did not stand much chance of winning the presidential elections, since the ruling Republican Party had the advantage of not only financial but also administrative resources in the form of the entire state machine. However, Tsarukyan could still be a serious adversary for Sargsyan in the elections. There could be a runoff with the opposition united around Tsarukyan, enabling him to claim a substantial segment of power and resources after the elections. Hypothetically, after this kind of success, Tsarukyan could claim the post of the Prime Minister for himself or a member of his party, thus creating a true government coalition instead of a decorative one.

We can only guess which mechanisms of pressure and counter-pressure were used by both sides. On December 12, not long before the start of the election campaign, Gagik Tsarukyan announced that his party would not participate in the election. Apparently, the fact that Tsarukyan is primarily a businessman was crucial for his decision. He dropped out of the race after assessing the cost of the campaign, taking into account the high likelihood of defeat. To compare, in neighbouring Georgia, a similar project was successful. However, Tsarukyan's Georgian counterpart Bidzina Ivanishvili was different in two things. First, if we trust the experts, his fortune is many times larger than Tsarukyan's, and second, it was made and is located in Russia, not Georgia.

After Gagik Tsarukyan decided against running for president, the result of the election was predefined to the extent that the existence of other candidates made no difference. Not a single candidate had even a hypothetical chance of accumulating the resources needed for victory or at least competition against Serzh Sargsyan. The best that could be attempted was to make sure that voters who cannot in principle vote for the incumbent all vote for the same candidate. As to the authorities, their goal was exactly the opposite of what it had been earlier: they needed to conduct the elections decently and avoid a landslide of 85% or higher. That goal was reached. In February

2013, Serzh Sargsyan was re-elected president with a decent 58% of the poll while Raffi Hovhannisyan came second with 37%, winning all the votes of the protest-minded electorate while posing no threat to Sargsyan.

In terms of domestic policy, the result of the electoral cycle was thus the double success of the Republican Party: on the one hand, complete domination in the decision-making system, on the other, at least a formal reduction of the social polarization of the last five years, achieved by means of allowing the opposition to enter the political system, though exclusively on the level of formal institutions and in TV footage. In reality, the social polarization is still there, because it has profound reasons chiefly of a social nature. However, no degree of political polarization could enable any political force to stand up to the current authorities. The weak legitimacy of the authorities is compensated for by the marginalization of the opposition. According to the experience of many countries, such unstable stability can exist indefinitely as long as there is no one to challenge it.

The main domestic policy issue in Armenia is the weakness of the party system. All parties except the ruling one have just enough capacity to fight for seats in parliament during the elections but not enough to fulfil their functions in between elections, i.e. most of the time. The activity of opposition political parties becomes discreet and they become disposable electoral tools rather than political parties. As to the ruling party, it has turned into a mechanism for recruiting governmental officials and building relations with businesses, which are already affiliated with it. Such a party cannot fulfil the basic function of a political party, i.e. that of aggregating the interests of social groups. By melding with the state administrative apparatus, the party simply stops being a party. Against this background, the demand for opposition is huge, while the supply is running dry. At the time of writing, it has shrunk to the extent of posing absolutely no threat to the regime.

Armenia's foreign policy and its relations to other countries, including Georgia, are not much influenced by the twists and turns of the domestic policy. Contrary to the popular myth, the Armenian political actors are not grouped by their orientation in foreign policy, but purely by their position in domestic politics. Narratives about foreign policy issues are quite popular in Armenian public discourses, whether political, analytical or media, however, they reflect the actors' positioning within the domestic political reality of Armenia much more than genuine attitudes to external reality. That is why these narratives are often schematic, dichotomic and primitive. Real policy is made off the record, and politicians set purely pragmatic goals while making decisions.

This structure of decision-making in Armenia makes it clandestine, personalized, highly dependent on various types of lobbying and insufficiently susceptible to institutional procedures. Its agenda is formed *ad hoc*, the policy is often reactive rather than proactive, reacting to problems and challenges instead of pre-empting them. Political decisions are affected by private concerns, which can lead, for example, to the appointment of outsiders as ambassadors. This is not exclusively the problem of Armenia's ministry for foreign affairs or foreign policy. This is a much deeper problem of Armenia's ruling structures, which, in their turn, depend a lot on the domestic political situation.



# IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ARMENIAN-GEORGIAN EXPERT FORUM

*Based on the proceedings of the meeting of Armenian and Georgian experts on foreign policy and security of Georgia and Armenia (Tbilisi, December 5-6, 2014)*

## ***Introduction***

Below is the summary of the main observations and ideas expressed during the meeting of Armenian and Georgian experts on 5-6 December 2014, and a short list of recommendations based on the ideas expressed at the meeting. The meeting was jointly organized by the Caucasus Institute (Armenia) and the Republican Institute (Georgia) and in Tbilisi with the financial and organizational support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

The participants of the meeting discussed the current state of affairs in the two countries and the impact of global and regional developments on bilateral relations, and evaluated the latest trends and possible political and other risks. A crosscutting theme of the discussions was the need for deeper collaboration between Georgian and Armenian experts and the establishment of various cooperation formats.

In general it can be noted that the discussions were rich in new ideas and observations, and created a good basis for further development of bilateral expert dialogue; they also proposed a useful and effective model of action that can be further developed during the upcoming meetings.

## ***Overview of activities***

The meeting of Armenian and Georgian experts took place on December 5-6, 2014 in Tbilisi, as the first phase of the planned permanent Armenian-Georgian expert dialogue. The concept of the meeting was based on a synergy of three interrelated events that laid the foundation for a model of future cooperation within the framework of the expert dialogue, combining elements of expert discussion, exchange, public education and design of future actions. The following three interrelated events were:

- Closed Expert Workshop on December 5 from 10:00 to 17:30 at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel;
- Open round table at the Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University on December 5, from 18:30 to 20:00;

- A planning meeting discussing future work at the Villa Mtiebi Hotel on December 6, from 10:00 to 13:30.

During the workshop, Armenian and Georgian experts paid special attention to the political and social processes currently taking place in Armenia and Georgia, the foreign policy of the two countries, the dynamic geopolitical situation and threats to regional security, the impacts of global and regional processes on bilateral relations, and the assessment of current trends and anticipated risks. At the meeting and at the planning session on the next day, the prospects of Armenian-Georgian civil cooperation were discussed, focusing in particular on the possible formats of a permanent forum of experts, academics and representatives of civil society.

The workshop was organized around three themes / panels, with two presentations in each panel (one each by an Armenian and a Georgian expert) followed by a discussion of the presentations and expression of opinions around the theme of the panel (held under the Chatham House rule to allow greater freedom of communication). The audience was comprised of invited experts, representatives of civil society, academia and the project's donor organizations.

The meeting was opened by the speeches of the two project coordinators – Alexander Iskandaryan and Nino Kalandarishvili - and the director of the regional branch of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Julia Blaesius, who outlined the general situation in the South Caucasus as well as the need, purpose and format of the planned bilateral expert dialogue.

The panels were organized around the following topics:

1. Internal political processes in Armenia and Georgia, and their influence on Georgian-Armenian relations and the foreign policy of the two countries (Speakers: Alexander Iskandaryan, Director of the Caucasus Institute in Yerevan, and Iago Kachkachishvili, Professor, Doctor, Head of the Department of Sociology, Tbilisi State University; Moderator: Nino Kalandarishvili)
2. Different external orientations of Armenia and Georgia, and the prospects for bilateral cooperation (Speakers: David Petrosyan, freelance journalist, Yerevan; and Tamar Pataraiia, Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, Tbilisi; Moderator: Sergey Minasyan)
3. Changes in the geopolitical environment and regional security issues (Speakers: Sergey Minasyan, Doctor of Political Science, Deputy Director of the Caucasus Institute, and George Tarkhan-Mouravi, the Institute for Public Policy, Tbilisi; Moderator: Alexander Iskandaryan)

The same evening, Tbilisi State University hosted a roundtable discussion on the topics of the workshop with the participation of Armenian experts. The meeting was moderated by Professor George Gogsadze of Tbilisi State University. The audience included students, journalists, scholars, and other persons interested in political processes in Armenia and the South Caucasus. Following the presentations, everyone had the opportunity to ask a question or express an opinion.

The next day, on December 6, at the Villa Mtiebi Hotel, still another meeting was held with the participation of project coordinators and leaders of organizations engaged in this project, dedicated to the planning of future work. The meeting discussed the plans for the follow-up to the workshop. It was decided to prepare the workshop papers for publication in two languages (Russian and English), and to pay special attention to long-term plans of bilateral cooperation / expert dialogue, and parallel public events for wider audiences.

### ***Main themes discussed at the workshop***

Both the speakers and the invited participants stressed the dynamic nature of the current political situation in both countries, but also the absence of existential challenges and risks in the short term.

While discussing the situation in Georgia, it was noted that, on the one hand, there is gradual disillusionment with the ruling coalition on the part of the population, but on the other, this does not lead to the strengthening of the main opposition party, the National Movement. One should thus expect the emergence of a "third force" that would be able to mobilize the votes of disillusioned voters. It is also obvious that such a political force is unlikely to be a completely new one, but rather, one should expect it to evolve by means of a change in the configuration of existent political structures. Another important trend is related to less intensive work with ethnic and religious minorities, frequently inconsistent policies and inadequate internal coordination within the current Georgian government. The lack of internal unity in the ruling coalition is reflected in an erratic and generally weak foreign policy, including with regard to bilateral relations with Armenia and Russia.

During the discussion of the situation in Armenia, it was noted that a single political force - the Republican Party – has complete dominance over the country's politics. Although genuine opposition is actually represented in the Armenian parliament, it is still weak and fragmented, and thus has no real opportunity to influence decisions. Nevertheless, the presence of the opposition in the parliament has gradually led to a shift of the political process from the 'street' towards the more institutionalized framework of the parliament, while radical rhetoric is losing influence. At the

same time, civil protests, mostly organized through social networks, though becoming more and more frequent, are losing political dimension and mostly focus on the environmental, cultural or economic issues. The weakness of political parties and domestic politics in general leads to an equally weak interdependence of domestic and foreign policy in Armenia, on one hand, chiefly reactive to external challenges, and on the other, remaining quite cautious and moderate in bilateral relations with Georgia, despite the presence of some sensitive issues (e.g. problems with the high cost of transit, or concerns over Javakheti, etc.). It is interesting to note that representatives of the community of Armenian migrants from Georgia, quite large and influential in Armenia but also in Russia, use their status mainly to strengthen their position and influence within the political elite, but do not unite around any political programme, despite maintaining close ties with Georgia.

It was also noted that in Georgia the factor of the Armenian minority in Javakheti is still seen as a risk factor, especially now in view of the contrasting foreign policy orientations of the two countries that are causing a certain extent of mutual distrust. In its turn, in Armenia, similar concerns are related to possible instability in Georgia, which could damage its crucially important transit role. However, in the longer-term ideological perspective, nobody in Armenia is striving for the so-called 'Eurasianism', and Armenia's identification with the West has no real alternative. Georgia is thus, in a sense, paving the way toward the West for Armenia as well as for itself, especially with regard to European integration and relations with the EU, while at the same time serving as a political buffer between the EU and Russia.

Despite the fact that since September 2013, Armenia and Georgia have worked towards different integration projects, there has been a rather high degree of correlation between the actions of the two countries in the international arena on almost all issues, except for matters related to the right of nations to self-determination and the principles of territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders. Obviously, this in turn is associated with a different, even opposite, attitude of the two countries to ethno-political regional conflicts in which they are involved. Apart from this issue, the overall correlation once again confirms the similar pro-European orientation of the both countries in the long term, and the forced nature of the current difference. From the day of independence, the main issue of the Armenia's foreign policy has been the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The current pro-Russian foreign policy orientation is therefore associated with the need to guarantee security for both Armenia and Karabakh.

On the one hand, differences in the foreign policy orientation are seen as a serious problem, though so far it has not interfered with the fruitful cooperation between Armenia and Georgia. On the other hand, provided the relationship remains good, such mutual complementarity can sometimes be very useful, especially in the economic sphere. Nevertheless, in Armenia there are currently serious concerns over the alleged development of an Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey strategic triangle, although to date this triangular cooperation has mainly remained limited to transport communications and transit of energy, and some degree of cooperation in the military realm between Georgia and Turkey. However, even the transportation corridor projects are seen in Armenia as contributing to its further isolation and blockade. Yet, as long as there is no institutional presence of the NATO in the South Caucasus, Armenia's membership in the CSTO does not hinder the development of relations with the West. In this case, Georgia's signing of the Association Agreement with the EU is seen as a rather positive development for Armenia.

Regardless of which political forces are in power in Yerevan and Tbilisi, there is still the realization that the current situation moves them to different sides of geopolitical barriers. But at the same time, there is a clear trend: the two governments do everything possible to preserve traditionally and historically well-established bilateral relations.

Recent developments in Ukraine, the annexation of the Crimea, and the resulting general collapse of the system of European security and world order, have radically changed, among many other things, the regional security system in the South Caucasus. Against the background of growing threats, all traditional challenges pale; however, there are also the regional conflicts that may well flare up with renewed vigour. There are many worries related to the growing aggravation of the situation, and the risk of renewed large-scale conflict along the line separating the sides in the conflict zone is apparently associated with the tectonic changes in the overall geopolitical situation in the region. The new version of the Cold War looms on the horizon, and some experts even sporadically discuss the likelihood of a full-scale war.

All this poses a serious threat to the countries of the South Caucasus, and especially to Georgia. Of particular concern to the Georgian society is the creeping annexation by Russia of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which has to date resulted, in the first case, in the signing, and in the second, in the preparation of bilateral agreements that legalize the actual annexation of these internationally recognized regions of Georgia.

## ***Ideas and recommendations in the area of expert dialogue***

A number of important issues related to the Armenian-Georgian relations have been discussed at the meetings. The participants noted that the relations at the level of civil societies are insufficiently developed, contacts between their representatives and experts are rare and irregular. Such a situation does not enable effective sharing of information and experience, or implementation of joint projects. The situation is aggravated by the fact that the respective governments are not adequately using the existing independent expertise in the decision-making process.

Despite the strengthening of political and economic ties between Armenia and Georgia, in the last decade, a growing alienation between the Armenian and Georgian societies can be observed, along with the weakening of interest toward each other, especially among young people. The citizens of these two countries are much more interested in the outside world and distant (developed) countries than their immediate neighbours. At the same time, the worsening geopolitical situation and the different foreign policy orientations of the two countries require particularly careful and competent policies.

The situation could be remedied through the stimulation of mutual interest by activating the media, launching educational initiatives, and establishing and boosting collaboration between civil society representatives and experts of the two countries.

The range of possible areas of cooperation is quite extensive, so in the first place, one should consider the ways of institutionalising such cooperation, but also look for the most promising areas of bilateral cooperation, as institutionalization without practical content has no future.

It is proposed to institutionalise bilateral cooperation in the format of a permanent Armenian-Georgian Expert Board, which would hold regular meetings, exchange information, organise thematic seminars and conferences on topics of mutual interest not limited to bilateral relations. There is an obvious need for establishing a channel of continuous information sharing with frequent publication of the results of joint discussions and research.

Some of the main objectives of cooperation must be improving the quality and amount of information about the two countries that is disseminated by the media, opposing any media hype on the basis of controversial, one-sided, or inaccurate materials, and preventing the circulation of superficial stereotypes and misconceptions about each other. This can be promoted by

strengthening the work of experts with the media and by assisting the professional development of journalists dealing with regional matters.

One of the problems shared by the two countries is the insufficient quantity and quality of academic knowledge about each other. Since today's university students show little interest in the region, the existing deficiency is likely to persist. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the overall situation by promoting scientific cooperation as a whole.

Of particular significance is the development of cultural contacts, and expert cooperation has good potential for development in this area (e.g. organization of exhibitions and other cultural events, promotion of cooperation in the field of protection of cultural monuments). Such cooperation is especially important due to the existence of cultural and ethnic enclaves – in particular, the compactly residing Armenian community in Georgia (Javakheti) – since their members see preservation of cultural identity an important goal that requires professional expert advice. It may perhaps be possible not only to conduct joint expert assessment of the problems and needs of ethnic minorities, but also to initiate public interest in the two countries toward this subject that requires balanced and professional coverage.

### ***Conclusions***

It became obvious as a result of discussions during the bilateral meeting that the very logic of development of relations between the two countries dictates a need for greater interaction between the Armenian and Georgian civil societies, and in particular, the development of expert dialogue. This endeavour a strategic approach, coupled with targeted efforts. The first steps in this direction have been very encouraging, but at the same time remind us of the need to take special care so that the process that has so successfully begun does not become an end in itself that would not affect the achievement of objectives outlined during the meeting.

It is necessary to strike a balance between maintaining institutional memory and continuity, on the one hand, and ensuring the rotation of participants, on the other hand, so as to enlarge the circle of involved experts and civil society activists. Again, one must always remember that the ultimate goal is bringing the Armenian and Georgian societies closer together while stimulating greater mutual interest, greater quantity and quality of knowledge about each other amongst the wide public as well as experts.