



# **SOLVING SOUTH CAUCASIAN CONFLICTS AND BUILDING REGIONAL SECURITY: EUROPEAN AND EURO- ATLANTIC INTEGRATION AS A POTENTIAL PATH TO PEACE**

*The demise of the USSR in 1991 created a power vacuum in the Soviet space that lingers to this day. This development acted as a catalyst in igniting the conflicts in and around the region. Security concerns of the independent states have steadily increased over the past decade and a half and a search for alternative centers for cooperation and security has come about. Russia's incapacity to offer a sound and reliable cooperation and security system coupled with an increased interest of European and Euro-Atlantic forces in the region has opened the way for a higher level of integration of these states with the West. The result of the tug of war between Russia and the West over the region remains open.*

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**T**he collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR) and the whole Socialist camp, the formation of new independent states, the accelerated enlargement of the European Union (EU) and NATO to the East, the beginning of a large-scale struggle against terrorism, and the increased influence of liberal market mechanisms in the global economy have produced profound geopolitical change in the world within the last 15-20 years. Needless to say, these phenomena are very much interrelated.

Abrupt turns have been experienced in Russian politics within the last two-three years; there has been a withdrawal from democratic principles, an aggressive foreign policy has been pursued, and energy policies towards neighboring countries have been unpredictable.

These changes, particularly around the region of South Caucasus (SC), have taken place in historically short periods and may bear positive as well as negative consequences for the countries of the region. As a result, the role of SC is growing in international affairs. How should the SC countries act in response to the quickly changing dynamics of international politics? What kind of system could ensure the security of the region most effectively? Will it be individual or collective? How will long festering conflicts in the region be resolved? This article intends to address these questions.

### ***The Collapse of the USSR and Formation of New Independent States***

The USSR ceased to exist as a unique geopolitical and geo-economic entity after its collapse. The last 15 years have shown that the interests of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) do not overlap. Furthermore, interrelations between Russia and countries of the CIS have become hostile as evidenced in the following examples. Relations between Russia and Turkmenistan have become strained at times due to the issue of transit prices of Turkmen gas to Europe; relations between Russia, Ukraine and Belarus have also been affected by energy-related matters, mainly due to the transfer of Russian gas via the territory of Ukraine and Belarus. Russia's relations with Ukraine and Georgia are aggravated. This has been manifested by the decision of Russian authorities to ban Ukrainian meat and dairy products and Georgian wines and mineral waters.

Russia was not able to offer new models of cooperation to the CIS Countries. As a result, a process of their reorientation to other countries, organizations, and security systems began. There are several examples of this - the political decision by Ukrainian and Georgian authorities to join NATO; the exit of Turkmenistan from the common visa space of the CIS; the accession of Georgia, Moldova, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan into the World Trade Organization (WTO), which, in fact, means the collapse of the economic space of the CIS; Kazakhstan's decision to transport part of its oil to Europe bypassing Russia; the deployment of a military contingent

of NATO countries. on the territory of certain countries of Central Asia (including members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) of CIS - Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) during the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan.

With the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia, the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine, the “Poppy Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan and the change of foreign policy in Moldova, the strive for freedom of peoples of these countries is becoming evident. The CIS, formed after the collapse of the USSR, was not able to satisfy the expectations of these countries. Nothing was gained either by multi-speed integration within the CIS-fours, -fives and -sixes (the Customs Union of the four: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan; Euro-Asian Economic Cooperation: Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; the CSTO: Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan).<sup>1</sup> They also proved to be incapable. So, no wonder the president of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili, gave orders to the Government of Georgia to verify the expedience of Georgia staying in the CIS, and in May 2006 Ukrainian-Georgian consultations on the effectiveness of the structures of this organization were launched. It seems that already in the nearest future we will be speaking about the CIS in the past tense.

CIS countries have the opportunity to compare the projects that are being realized in cooperation with them by European countries and the U.S. with those offered to them by Russia. And if organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), the EU and NATO offer these countries serious programs comprising assistance in legislative, legal, political, military, economic, environmental and humanitarian spheres, then Russia’s “assistance”, as a rule, is limited to interference into the domestic affairs of these countries. This was demonstrated in 2003-2004 during the presidential elections in Georgia and Ukraine, parliamentary elections in Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, and during the period of political crises of 2005 in Uzbekistan, when Russia supported the corrupted regimes and authoritarian leaders in these countries, openly taking a stand against the candidates from democratic powers.

### ***Enlargement of the EU and NATO to the East***

After the last enlargement of the EU and NATO in 2004, countries of the South Caucasian region became neighboring countries with these organizations. According to the principles of activity of these organizations, they aspire to cooperate with neighbors and are interested in the development of democracy and establishment of stable political systems. In addition, they are interested in developing cooperative frameworks in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Only with the peaceful solution

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<sup>1</sup> For related views see Stepan Grigoryan, *Armenia-Russia – CIS: Present and Future of the Post-Soviet Space*, Politia, Moscow, #3 (2000) and Stepan Grigoryan, *On Possibility of Creation of the Security System of SC*, Obshchaya Tetrada, Moscow, #1 (20) (2002)

of regional conflicts and complete integration of SC into European and international institutions will this be possible.

During the NATO Istanbul summit, which was held in June 2004, a decision stating that the regions of South Caucasus and Central Asia (CA) are strategically important regions for NATO was adopted. An announcement was made about the willingness to increase the level of cooperation from “Partnership for Peace” to a closer relationship, based on individual program activities, and the establishment of an institution of special representatives in CA and SC. Georgia and Armenia, in December 2005, signed an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO, which put relations with the Alliance on a new qualitative level. After the enlargement of the EU, this organization has come to cooperate with CIS countries even more actively. It should be noted that all the countries of SC, and also Ukraine and Moldova, are involved in the group of countries developing intensified programs of cooperation within the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP).

Together with the U.S., the role of the EU and NATO is being enhanced in the solution of conflicts on the territory of the former USSR. Accordingly, new formats to solve such conflicts have been adopted. For example, the Transnistrian conflict has been enlarged from five-lateral (OSCE, Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, and Transnistria) to seven-lateral by attaching the EU and the U.S. to negotiations as observers. After the meeting of foreign ministers of the OSCE in Ljubljana at the beginning of December 2005, Russia and Georgia came to an agreement about the necessity to include the EU and other concerned parties in the solution of the South Ossetian conflict and also agreed that it is necessary to enlarge the peacekeeping contingent in the region (today consisting solely of Russian peacekeepers).

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been members of the OSCE since 1992 and of CoE since 2001. European (CoE and EU) and Euro-Atlantic (OSCE and NATO) integrations are viewed positively, as both of these processes are founded on a common system of principles and values. These integration processes should flow in parallel and in an inter-conditioned way. Integration of the South Caucasian region into NATO is necessary as this “force” element must play the role of restraining factor in the solution of regional conflicts. NATO, may become the “bridge” that could later ensure bilateral cooperation between Armenia and Turkey in the military sphere.

Assistance from the CoE and OSCE is important to improve legislation and make it compatible with democratic principles and norms –criminal, administrative and electoral codes, laws on parties and nongovernmental organizations, anti-corruption legislation, laws on mass media, on Ombudsmans, on alternative military service, and on the rights of the national and religious minorities– and this is not the exhaustive list of the legislative acts developed jointly with these organizations. The CoE and OSCE also carry out serious work on monitoring the elections in the region.

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European and Euro-Atlantic integration is essential for the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. These have unchallenged advantages over the other variants of integration, such as the CIS. European integration supposes democratic mechanisms of election and re-election of authorities, i.e. high level of legitimacy of authorities, something which is necessary, as it is clear that the solution of SC conflicts based on mutual compromises and concessions require political courage and responsibility. European integration supposes the creation of democratic, free and pluralistic societies and experience shows that only these tend to solve problems peacefully, via the mechanism of negotiations, dialogue between the parties of the conflict and also through prevention of conflict escalation. European integration also supposes free market relations, free movement of goods, services and funds, which inevitably diminishes the role of borders between states. European integration also supposes respect and protection of human rights, of the rights of national and religious minorities, and the establishment of guaranteed conditions for their development.

### ***Struggle Against Terrorism***

The world has undergone serious changes since the events of September 11th 2001. The U.S. adopted a military stance that included the doctrine of preemptive attacks on terrorist groups, weakening and neutralizing totalitarian regimes that are perceived as bases of extremist groups, and promoting democratic development of countries in problematic regions of the world. The U.S. was able to uphold these ideas at the Summit of the G8 in July 2004 where a decision on the creation of the “Greater Middle East Initiative” which includes the countries of the Arabian world as well as Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan was adopted.

At NATO’s Istanbul Summit a decision was adopted in favor of the American position on the necessity to defend NATO countries where and when these threats appear.<sup>2</sup> Through the formation of antiterrorist coalitions (anti-Taliban, anti-Saddam, and others) European countries and the U.S. are confronting international terrorism, Yet let us note that the positions of the U.S. and European countries did not always coincide on matters concerning the place and time of delivering blows to so-called terrorists. Germany and France were particularly against the military operations in Iraq without the consent of the UN Security Council.

Russia showed its readiness to assist in providing reconnaissance data and consented to conduct active military action. During the official visit of the U.S. President George W. Bush to Moscow in May 2002, the “Joint Declaration on Antiterrorist Activity” was signed, which specifically says: “Reaffirming our

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<sup>2</sup> Stepan Grigoryan, Expansion of NATO and the EU on the East and Influence of this Process on Solution Format Change of the Karabakh Problem, from the materials of the conference “Integration into the International Organizations as a Guarantee of Conflict Peaceful Resolution in South Caucasus” (Yerevan, 2005, page 33); Stepan Grigoryan, About the European Integration of the South Caucasian Region <http://www.hra.am> 23 March 2005

commitment to the struggle with terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, we welcome the efforts undertaken by the international antiterrorist coalition since 11 September 2001 [...] we call for all countries to complete fully the provisions of the resolutions of the UN Security Council including resolutions 1368, 1373, 1377 and 1390 aimed against terrorism, the Taliban movement and "Al Kaida", ... taking into account that sovereignty, long-lasting stability, prosperity and further democratic development of states of Central Asia respond to strategic interests of Russia and the U.S...". Despite the differences in positions of the U.S. and Russia, both countries display willingness for cooperation in the antiterrorist sphere, in prevention and non-proliferation of terrorism.

### ***Development of Democratic Processes in the World***

Every day more and more countries are under democratic rule and rely on market economies. Successful transformation of Eastern European and Baltic countries to democracy has activated democratic processes in a number of CIS (i.e. Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova) and Middle Eastern countries (great changes took place in Lebanon where progressive powers were able to achieve the withdrawal of Syrian forces from the territory of their country).

These countries are in search of new formats of cooperation. Thus, in 2005 the Presidents of Ukraine Vladimir Yushchenko and Mikhail Saakashvili of Georgia unrolled an initiative to create a belt of countries of "Democratic choice" from the Baltic to the Black and Caspian Seas (which will comprise of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and, maybe, Armenia and Azerbaijan). In early May 2006, the presidents of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, the vice-president of the U.S. Richard Cheney, high-ranking representatives of NATO and the EU, the prime ministers and foreign ministers of Austria, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Hungary, Norway, Canada, Spain, Azerbaijan and Armenia took part in the "Vilnius Conference 2006: Common Vision of Common Neighborhood". The U.S. and EU members states voiced their main priorities: to provide assistance to Ukraine and Georgia in their aspirations to democracy and to give them a chance to enter NATO and the EU already in the near term. Richard Cheney stated that "America will strongly support those who aspire to enter NATO and the EU".<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. and EU are trying to help these countries in their search for new, more effective formats of cooperation. Among the possible configuration is the geopolitical space of the "Greater Middle East", and the EU initiative of cooperation with a number of countries in North Africa, the Arab World and the CIS through the ENP program (here the geopolitical space comprises Ukraine, Moldova, SC countries, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, countries of North Africa – all in all 17 countries).

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<sup>3</sup> The materials of the conference are available on the site: [www.forumvilnius.lt](http://www.forumvilnius.lt)

### *Turn in the Politics of Russia*

The current Russian administration and its political elite declare their adherence to democratic values and a free market economy. However Russia's adherence to democratic principles and norms is highly debatable: freedom of the political opposition is limited, all TV channels of federal level are under complete control of the authorities, the new law on the activity of non-governmental (noncommercial) organizations adopted by the State Duma (the Parliament) imposes serious restrictions on them, and a campaign is being carried out against the representatives of national minorities living in Russia.

Such a vague domestic political situation is directly mirrored in the foreign politics of the country. On the one hand, Russia admits the right of the EU, NATO, and the U.S. to actively cooperate with the countries of SC on all matters, including military cooperation and regional security. In line with this, the Joint Declaration signed by President George W. Bush and President Vladimir Putin in May 2002 states: "In Central Asia and the South Caucasus we admit the common interest in supporting stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states of this region..." and so, "Russia and the United States will cooperate in solving regional conflicts, and among them are those in Abkhazia and Nagorno Karabakh, as well as the problem of Transnistria in Moldova". On the other hand, Russia takes to heart all steps of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova that are aimed at the search of more reliable partners in political, economic and military spheres, it supports totalitarian regimes such as that of Islam Karimov- President of Uzbekistan and Aleksandr Lukashenko- President of Belarus.

The role of Russia in the space of the former USSR during the last couple of years has, on the whole, been destructive. It is worth mentioning the "gas blackmail" Russia has conducted against practically all its partners from the CIS. It made an attempt to raise the price of Russian gas two to four times! Occasionally this happens with concluded agreements. Thus, Ukraine had a signed agreement with Russia on the prices of supplies of gas up to 2013. Certainly, the transfer to a market economy in such matters is an inevitable process, yet this should be done step-by-step, taking into consideration the mutual interests of the parties and surely not in the midst of winter. Besides, this transfer to new relations of Russia with the CIS countries should touch upon wider spheres of cooperation, and not only those that the Russian party wants. Thus, Ukraine quite fairly demanded the revision of the prices for transit of Russian gas via its territory, and demands revision of conditions on deployment of the Black Sea Navy of Russia in the Crimea.

These new "gas initiatives" of Russia will shortly bring about the final collapse of the CIS as an organization, as opposed to the EU, CE, OSCE and NATO, which rest on democratic values unlike the CIS foundation which rests on preferences for gas which Russia gives to the country-members of the CIS.



### ***Rise of the Role of the South Caucasus in International Affairs***

The above-mentioned events in the world have changed the region's role in the eyes of the world community. It may be asserted that the importance of these countries is increasing. First, large international energy and transport projects are being realized in the region, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (which has very recently become operational), the Erzurum-Tbilisi-Baku gas pipeline, the Erzurum-Akhalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku railroad, and a number of other projects. Upon completion, changes in the economic structure of the South Caucasian region may be ascertained. As the largest international corporations are realizing these projects it is clear that the interest of European countries and the U.S. in the region is high and increasing. Today, amidst unpredictable Russian energy politics and the rising gas and oil prices, the problem of diversification of channels to transmit oil and gas from the Caspian and Central Asian regions to Europe has gained immense importance.

Second, Azerbaijan and Georgia's active participation in conjunction with the members of the anti-Saddam coalition, their support for initiatives against international terrorism (also joined by Armenia), participation in peacekeeping operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan has garnered a positive reaction from the U.S. Since 2002, the U.S. has begun to provide assistance to modernize national armies in the region and to train staff for the antiterrorist struggle. A Center of anti-deployment of mines has been established in Armenia, an Antiterrorist Center has been established in Georgia, and in Azerbaijan the U.S. is improving communication in this country's army. Frequent visits by high ranking U.S. officials also indicate positive, continuing relations between these countries.

Third, after the last enlargement of the EU and NATO, the countries of the region have become neighbors to these organizations. These organizations have common principles which emphasize cooperation with neighboring countries and support the development of democracy and stable political systems. Georgia and Armenia have signed IPAP with NATO and the EU has adopted a decision on cooperation with the countries of the region within the ENP program. Besides, according to paragraph 32 of the Communiqué adopted at the NATO Summit in Istanbul, the NATO countries welcome the political decision of Azerbaijanian and Georgian authorities to integrate with NATO.

Fourth, the rapprochement of the positions of the U.S. and the EU on a number of fundamental questions concerning the South Caucasus (SC) is important. This included the matter of normalizing Armenian-Turkish relations where the U.S. thought it necessary to open the Armenian-Turkish border. Since the consolidation of the prospective membership of Turkey, the EU agrees with the U.S. concerning the border, and demands that Turkey normalize its relations with "all neighbors".

Fifth, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are members of the OSCE and CoE and have committed themselves, in connection with this, to serious obligations - to

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conduct democratic, free and lawful elections, to respect human rights, to solve regional conflicts through peaceful means and so forth. Since the Baltic and Eastern European countries successfully overcame the transformation from socialist to democratic societies, the OSCE and CoE began to work with the SC countries more actively. This was stated in the Edinburgh declaration of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE that took place in 2004, where in Articles 9, 10 of Part 3 the necessity is emphasized to shift the institutions of the OSCE to the SC and CA, to increase financing for these regions and to increase the number of conferences and other events of the OSCE carried out in these regions. The activity of the CoE has increased considerably in the region; reports on completion of committed obligations by the countries of South Caucasus are heard at practically every meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE.

Sixth, in Georgia, after the coming to power of Mikhail Saakashvili and his political team, European countries and the U.S. gained reliable partners in the region. Saakashvili's position is clear: the place of Georgia is in the family of European nations, and its security can be reinforced by Georgian integration into NATO.

Seventh, Iran's nuclear program and problems with the energy resources in the world. Enrichment of uranium in Iranian laboratories and an insufficient degree of openness to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors have caused the U.S. and Iranian standoff to deteriorate. As opposed to the U.S.- EU positions in the build up to the Iraq war, one may note a tendency of rapprochement of positions of the EU and the U.S. After the April 2006 transmission of the Iranian file to the UN Security Council, the U.S. and France (Great Britain and Germany have similar positions) demanded the UN Security Council to adopt a decision to use economic sanctions.

The Iranian crisis touches upon the interests and security of the SC countries and may bring serious tension to the region which might be significant for the U.S. and EU. No doubt, the U.S. visit of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev in late April 2006, at the height of the Iranian crisis, was noted in Washington because the position of Azerbaijan on the Iranian nuclear program was important.

Armenia and Azerbaijan, being immediate neighbors of Iran, are interested in a peaceful solution to this problem. It is clear that the exercise of sanctions against Iran will most probably bring serious complications in the South Caucasian region. The SC countries could play a more active role in the present situation.

Eighth, energy projects of the SC countries realized together with Iran. The gas scandal, which started at the end of the previous year when Russia began to reduce gas supplies to Ukraine and Moldova (as a result European countries who regularly buy gas from Russia suffered as well) requiring them to agree with a sharp increase in the price for gas, resulted in a situation where European countries realized that Russia was not a reliable partner and could revise agreements at any

moment. In the present situation the countries of Europe need to find alternative sources and channels of transporting oil and gas. Taking into account that Iran may be an alternative source of oil and gas for European countries the increase of interest of European countries towards Iran and the SC countries, which may become transit countries for transporting Iranian gas to Europe, is quite understandable.

In this newly formed situation a special role is attached to the gas pipeline from Iran to Armenia, which is currently being constructed. It is interesting to consider the possibility of transforming the Iranian-Armenian gas pipeline into a transit gas pipeline, continuing to Georgia and then, via the Black Sea, to Ukraine and Europe, or via the territory of Georgia to Turkey, and then to Europe. Also the possibility of constructing a new gas pipeline through Iran-Azerbaijan-Georgia, which would transfer Iranian gas to European markets is being considered. As a result of the “gas crisis” initiated by Russia, the European Union has come to view matters of energy resources among its priority targets within the ENP.

***What Should the Countries of the South Caucasus, and Specifically Armenia, do?***

The South Caucasian region should learn to respond quickly and adequately to the challenges of time. Ten years ago it was hard to imagine that Baltic countries could become EU or NATO members, that Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova would orientate to integration into the EU and would seek their security within NATO. However, today the following questions are vital for the SC: What system of values will they rely on? Will they really go the way of democratic development and, thus, in the direction of integration to Europe?

The effective security system for the countries of the region is NATO, although one cannot exclude that another security system will “snap into action” which might include bilateral military cooperation with the U.S. and/or European nations. It is high time for political elites to realize that the countries of the region will develop and flourish only if we learn to solve our problems through negotiations and compromise, that there is no alternative to the democratic means of development, and that there is no other way but regional cooperation and partnership. We should solve the problems existing between our countries ourselves, without “winning any outer actors round”.

The ability to ensure the existence of common aims and targets in countries united into a region, shared strategies towards the main challenges and threats that come into being in the world and the region, a common notion and acknowledgment by the citizens of the states of what the region is, and what the Neighborhood within the region is, are essential to the continued development of the SC region. Let us make a comparison of the situation in Baltic and South Caucasian regions.

*The existence of common aims and goals in countries united into a region:* As it can be viewed, Baltic countries, right after gaining independence, defined their aims quite clearly – the construction of democratic states – and headed for integration into the EU, ensuring their security within NATO. It is very important here that these goals were put forward and solved simultaneously by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and within these three countries there was high political consensus concerning these problems. Although Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have also declared the construction of democratic states to be their main aim and there seems to be great effort, there are also great inconsistencies. Abuses of human rights, limits on the freedoms of mass media, and falsifications of elections have become quite frequent phenomena. Here only Georgia can be highlighted, where after the “Rose Revolution” there is a tendency of democratization of society and more consistent strive to hold political reforms in the country. There are great differences in the positions of the SC countries also on the matter of integration into the EU and NATO. Georgian authorities and practically all political powers declared their intent to become a member of the EU and NATO, Azerbaijan declared its intent to integrate into the EU, but did not speak about the integration into NATO in an accentuated way. In case of Armenia, accession into the EU and NATO is not yet included in the agenda of foreign policy of the day.

*Common acknowledgement of major challenges and threats:* Baltic countries have a shared acknowledgement that major problems for Baltic countries stem from the “East” (i.e. from Russia). In the case of the SC the situation is more complicated: if the major threat for Georgia stems from the “North”, from Russia (Turkey is one of Georgia’s strategic partners together with the U.S. and Ukraine; and with Armenia and Azerbaijan Georgia has established neighborly relations), then the main threat for Armenia is still expected from Turkey, at least this is the notion that can be viewed among most of the political elite of Armenia, although, actually, threats for Armenia stem from the same “North”.

*For the region to function as a single entity it is necessary to have a common notion and acknowledgement of what a region is:* A region is not simply a geographic entity but also the notion and acknowledgment by the citizens of the region of being a single entity. Baltic countries, as soon as they gained independence, quite rapidly and effectively began to solidify relations with each other as well as with their neighbors beyond and around the region. That is, the principle of creating good neighborly relations and serious approach towards regional cooperation (accord of positions on the most vital matters in international organizations, solution of any disputable question through negotiations, mutual solidarity, etc.) were put in the core of policy of these countries. Alas, the same cannot be said about the case of SC countries, as the idea of a “Common Caucasian Home”, quite popular in Georgia, does not find enough support in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The region does not function as a single political, military, social-economic organism yet. Despite the efforts of the U.S. and EU to consider the region as a single entity and despite their attempts to realize joint regional projects, no significant changes in the situation can be noticed.

What should the main foreign political orientations of Armenia be in order to create the conditions for cooperation in the region and form a single security system?

First, Armenia should declare their intent to enter the EU and NATO and decline of the CSTO.<sup>4</sup> After the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia and normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations, the military structure of the South Caucasian region will change and then the problem of the future single security system of SC will become a reality.<sup>5</sup> Active military and military-technical cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan with the U.S. and NATO as well as fundamental cooperation with the EU within the ENP will “soften” the role of borders between the countries of the SC region.

Second, Armenia must decline conducting bilateral military training on its territory. Armenia should participate only in multilateral military training and operations specifically held by NATO. The withdrawal of Russian military bases from Georgia should be accompanied by transmitting part of the Russian arms from Georgia to Armenia.

Third, it should decline the politics of prolonging ("frozen conflict") the solution of the Karabakh conflict, which fortifies isolation of Armenia in the region and creates obstacles for the development of the region itself.

Fourth, the Armenian party, during the solution of Karabakh problem, should decline the principle of “status of Nagorno Karabagh - in return for the territories” (“package variant”) and should pass to the principle “security of Nagorno Karabakh - in return for the territories” (“step-by-step variant”). This will open the way to recommence the process of active negotiations.

Fifth, it should strive to establish good neighborly relations with all neighbors in the region, including Turkey and Azerbaijan. Armenia should decline putting forward any preliminary conditions before Turkey, and cross out the issue of acknowledging the Genocide of Armenians in 1915 from the foreign policy agenda, leaving the solution of this question to historians and the public of Armenia and Turkey. Yerevan should declare its interest in the accession of Turkey into the EU.

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<sup>4</sup> Stepan Grigoryan, “Armenia – Russia - CIS: Present and Future of the Post-Soviet Space”, Politia, Moscow #3 (2000)

<sup>5</sup> Stepan Grigoryan, “On Possibility of Creation of the Security System of SC”, Obshchaya Tetrad, Moscow #1 (20) (2002)

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Sixth, the civil society of Armenia should act more in the direction of democratization and regional cooperation. Synchronic democratization of Armenian and Azerbaijani societies, full realization of the obligations undertaken by Armenia and Azerbaijan before entering the CoE, making active the role of the civil society of Armenia and Azerbaijan in solving the Karabakh conflict will help to establish genuine Neighborhood in the region.

Certainly, these steps by Armenia also suppose positive reciprocation by its neighbors. Turkey could decline putting forward any preliminary conditions for normalizing relations with Armenia (for example, decline claims on the Karabakh issue, including withdrawal of military formations from the “controlled territories”). It should be necessary to differentiate between Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani problems.

Azerbaijan, in its turn, should be ready for mutual consensus and compromise in the solution of the Karabakh conflict. Besides, during realization of regional and trans-regional projects (oil, gas, energy, communications, transportation) Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia could contribute to the involvement of Armenia in these projects.

Today Azerbaijan connects the involvement of Armenia in regional cooperation to the solution of Karabakh conflict, i.e. Azerbaijan thinks that cooperation with Armenia is possible only after the solution of the Karabakh conflict. Yet, it is noteworthy to remember the fifty-five-year post-war successful experience of the European integration, which showed that the most complicated conflicts existing between states are solved during the process of economic, scientific and cultural cooperation.