REGIONAL SECURITY

THE CAUCASUS: LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE SECURITY SPHERE

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An adequate level of national security requires regional cooperation; even the countries on the opposite sides of a military-political confrontation have to cooperate, at least to preserve their non-military security. One of the traditional liberal formulas, cooperation is possible in peace, as well as at the height of conflict,[1] puts the above in a nutshell.

Hence the question of whether interstate regional cooperation is unlimited, or whether it is bound by certain factors created by the structure and dynamics of security-related relationships. In other words, is the cooperation potential of the West European countries equal to that of the Caucasian states? Today the answer is "no." This raises two more questions. First, which of the specifics of the regional relations in the security sphere in the Caucasus limit the local states' ability to regulate their security-related cooperation? Second, which of the possible developments may lead to an efficient security system in the Caucasus based on cooperation?

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[1] See: A.L. Ross, "The Theory and Practice of International Relations: Contending Analytical Perspectives," *Strategy and Force Planning*, Second Edition, ed. by The Strategy and Force Planning Faculty, Naval War College Press, Newport, RI, 1977, pp. 45-62.

Why Do the States Refuse to Cooperate?

The main reason for such reluctance in the Caucasus, which is viewed as a security complex,[2] is rooted in the specifics of the material-resource and perceptional-behavioral interdependence of the local

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[2] B. Buzan's conceptual model of the security complex based on the idea of interdependence of the key national security interests of a geographically distinctive group of states is used to describe the current security system in the Caucasus. Corre-

states' national security.[3] The states' general insecurity[4] and their readiness to jointly regulate the threats are limited by relational and structural factors. The specifics of interdependence of the Caucasian states' national security has generated classical dilemmas—the "security dilemma" and the "prisoner dilemma"—common to all states. They become hostages of the situation stemming from the structure of the international system and the rules of the game rather than from the specific intentions of one state in relation to another.[5]

Today the anarchic international system that stimulates conflicts and rivalry among the states is the main stumbling block on the road toward interstate cooperation[6]; it fails to offer the states the necessary guarantees against potential external threats; there is also no reasonably reliable knowledge about what the opponent intends to do in any specific case. Robert Jervis has the following to say: "Because there are no institutions or authorities that can make and enforce international law, the policies of cooperation that will bring mutual rewards if others cooperate may bring disaster if they do not."[7] This means that state A's reluctance to cooperate with state B is caused by state A's fear that state B might abuse its (state A's) openness and flexibility to realize its own (state B's) interests.[8]

Mutual fear and mistrust of each other's intention create a "vicious circle"[9] in which apprehensions force the countries to opt for a burdensome arms race, which adds to the countries' general state of insecurity. The "security dilemma" was first concentrated in the sphere of military security.[10] At the same time, B. Buzan is convinced that a similar situation may take shape within the political sectors of one state.[11]

According to K.N. Waltz, the "security dilemma" is a permanent phenomenon of interstate relations, which cannot be resolved, yet can be regulated.[12] The international systems' current specifics suggest that this is not necessarily true. I think that today the "security dilemma," its functioning, and the degree of its acuteness are different in different regions; they depend on the material-resource and perceptional-behavioral components of the security relations within any regional system. For example, we cannot say that these components are identical in the relations among the states of the West European and Caucasian security systems—in the same way we cannot equate the degree of acuteness of the security dilemma of the states of these regional systems. What is more while for the states of the Caucasian complex this dilemma is one of the most acute, in Western Europe it has been resolved. Bill McSweeney says: "European Union is today an example of a security dilemma transformed into a security community."[13]

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spondingly, the interstate security complex there is formed on the basis of the intertwined security interests of the three South Caucasian states (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia), and the powers of the traditional extra-regional triangle (Russia, Turkey and Iran), as well as on a great share of American interests (see: B. Coppieters, "Conclusions: The Caucasus as a Security Complex," in: *Contested Borders in the Caucasus,* VUBPress, Brussels, 1996; S.E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers. A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus,* Curzon Press, 2001, and also J. Eivazov, "The Antiterrorist Campaign and New Geopolitical and Security Trends in the Regional Systems of Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus,* No. 4 (16), 2002).

[3] I believe that at the current stage the national security aspects of all states involved in the regional system are intertwined and have the following structure composed of three components: (1) material-resource component (territory, kindred population, and natural resources); (2) perceptional-behavioral component (the perceptions of friendship/hostility shaped by the practice of contacts and corresponding behavior: the enemy image, alliances, and counter-alliances); (3) mutual dependence generated by transnational (ecological) threats to all.

[4] See: B. McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests. A Sociology of International Relations,* Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 90.

[5] See: B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era,* Second Edition, Lynne Rienner Publishers Boulder, Colorado, 1991, p. 121.

[6] See: J.M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3, Summer 1988, p. 485.

[7] R. Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics,* Vol. 30, No. 2, January 1978, p. 167.

[8] See: R.O. Keohane, L.L. Martin, "The Promise of Institutionalist Theory," *International Security,* Vol. 20, No. 1, Summer 1995, p. 45.

[9] K.N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics,* McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979, p. 186.

[10] B. McSweeney, op. cit., p. 90.

[11] See: B. Buzan, op. cit., p. 120.

[12] See: K.N. Waltz, op. cit., p. 187.

[13] B. McSweeney, op. cit., p. 91.

The Security Dilemma
in the Region

Today, the security dilemma is most obvious in the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan and Iran, Armenia and Turkey, Georgia and Russia, Russia and Turkey, Iran and Turkey, as well as, to a great extent, Russia and Azerbaijan, Iran and the United States, and Russia and the U.S. Correspondingly, within the framework of these duads the strengthening of one side sharpens the perception of threat by the other side, thus inviting its own more or less vigorous strengthening. Today, the dilemma is less acute within the Georgia-Armenia and Georgia-Iran duads, because there are minor contradictions in the material-resource and perceptional-behavioral aspects of their mutual security dependence. This should not be taken to mean, however, that the dilemma cannot become more acute: the region exhibits obvious trends of bloc building within which Georgia, on the one hand, and Armenia and Iran, on the other, possess opposite bloc identities.[14] If these trends strengthen to become even more polarized they will stimulate polarization at the bilateral level (between the members of these de facto alliances) that, finally, will aggravate the security dilemma at the bloc level and at the level of all the duads enumerated above.

The current approaches of the states of the Caucasian complex to their security correspond to the basic tenets of the theory of political realism to a much greater extent than of liberalism. Bruno Coppieters was quite right when he said: "All regional actors have tried to revise the existing forms of distribution of power through alliances with regional and non-regional powers. Military policies figured high in such an approach to regional security problems. The resulting system, although aimed at counterbalancing dominant forces, did not exclude hegemonic types of dominance."[15]

Can the Security Dilemma
in the Caucasus
Be Resolved?

Indeed, can the current security dilemma in the relations among the states of the Caucasian complex be resolved? If yes, what type of behavior will bring this about?

According to neo-realist political analysts, this phenomenon in interstate relations stems from the anarchic nature of the international political system.[16] This statement can be developed further: the security dilemma can be resolved only if the anarchic system of international relations is transformed into a hierarchical one. This will deprive the states of their sovereignty, while the interstate relations will be organized according to an inner-state hierarchical and centralized pattern.[17] To borrow words from R. Jervis, "the fear of being exploited"[18] by a stronger opponent will be responsible for this arrangement. Given this pattern, the fear can be neutralized, since the central destabilizing problem of international anarchy—the absence of an efficient central structure designed to regulate the relations among actors—is resolved.

On the other hand, the neo-realists believe that the possibility of such a transformation is vague—to achieve it the states would have to abandon their sovereignties, which, they believe, is the states' main

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[14] Here I have in mind two vectors of bloc building: Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan and Russia-Armenia-Iran.
[15] B. Coppieters, "A Regional Security System for the Caucasus," *Caucasian Regional Studies,* Vol. 5, Issue 1&2, 2000 [http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/crs/crs_2000/crs00_cob01.html].
[16] See: K.N. Waltz, op. cit., p. 187.
[17] Ibid., p. 88.
[18] R. Jervis, op. cit., p. 172.

priority.[19] K. Waltz has the following to say on this score: "No state intends to participate in the formation of a structure by which it and others will be constrained."[20]

Social constructivism offers a different explanation of the anarchic nature of the international system and its consequences, the security dilemma included. Its supporters believe that the attention should be concentrated on inter-social relationships (how relations are practiced among the societies of the relevant states, the perceptions they form of each other, etc.). According to social constructivism, anarchy itself is the product of a certain social structure formed during practical social interaction, therefore it can be changed in the same way. According to Alexander Wendt, "anarchy is what states make of it."[21] In other words, this is not a phenomenon that essentially does not depend on the practice and nature of interstate relationships, as supporters of neo-realism believe. A. Wendt says: "A security dilemma is a social structure composed of intersubjective understandings, in which states are so distrustful that they make worst-case assumptions about each others' intentions, and as a result define their interests in self-help terms."[22] In comparison with this, the security community is also a social structure based on common knowledge and values, on states' mutual trust, and on their desire to resolve conflicts through non-military means.[23] As distinct from positivism, the constructivist perspective does not impose limits on possible cooperation between states. Interaction among societies shapes social structures either into cooperative or conflicting ones and reforms them; this, in turn, creates the identities and interests of the corresponding actors.[24] This conceptual perspective speaks of deepening interaction among states, which, in turn, helps them integrate. This explains how West European countries managed to resolve the acute security dilemma that was invariably present in their relations; in the mid-20th century they started erecting a broad transregional security community.

Together with this, constructivism offers enough explanations of the currently urgent security dilemma obvious within the Caucasian complex. We should admit that the negative social-perceptional ideas rooted in the past and aggravated by the socioeconomic problems typical of the transition period (which interfere with efforts to regulate the security dilemma and, consequently, to draw the Caucasian nations closer) can be removed only with the help of constantly increasing and mutually advantageous cooperation at the level of societies. Social-perceptional ideas can be changed only through evolution, therefore, as K. Deutsch has pointed out, we can hardly expect that trust, mutual respect, and a feeling of community[25] can result from revolutionary and, even less likely, unilateral social activity. At the same time, the civilizational compatibility of the West European societies, which is objectively higher than in the Caucasian social units, becomes blatantly obvious to the intuitive analyst. And it is the civilizational compatibility that is responsible, to a great extent, for the rate at which relations among regional societies are evolving.

Cooperation in the Presence of the Security Dilemma

We should not think that the security dilemma rules out interstate cooperation altogether. Supporters of liberalism believe that states can cooperate, to a certain extent, within the anarchic international

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[19] See: L. Ross, op. cit.
[20] K.N. Waltz, op. cit., p. 91.
[21] A. Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization,* Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992, p. 395.
[22] A. Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security,* Vol. 20, No. 1, Summer 1995, p. 73.
[23] Ibidem.
[24] Ibid., p. 81.
[25] See: K. Deutsch *et al.*, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area,* Greenwood Press, Princeton, 1957, p. 31.

system[26] and with a security dilemma as its product. In fact, two phenomena of international relations—the security dilemma and cooperation—are mutually inclusive rather than exclusive. The security dilemma, which interferes with cooperation, is pushed even further by inadequate cooperation in the military-political sphere. Correspondingly, its ultimate regulation depends on interstate cooperation, which brings us back to "the vicious circle of the security dilemma"[27] as a huge problem for all states.

According to Jervis the conceptual model of interstate cooperation with a security dilemma can be improved: "(1) by increasing the gains of mutual cooperation and/or decreasing the costs an actor will pay if he cooperates and the other does not; (2) by decreasing the gains of taking advantage of the other and/or increasing the costs of mutual non-cooperation, and (3) by increasing each side's expectation that the other will cooperate."[28] When applied to the Caucasian context, none of the three points totally expresses the currently functioning stimulators of interstate cooperation. The first component of the first prerequisite and the second component of the second prerequisite ("increasing the gains of mutual cooperation" and "increasing the costs of mutual non-cooperation") look to be the most applicable. The positive role of these components in the Caucasus is determined by the mounting transnational threats which the current developments of the international system as a whole are producing.

In the Caucasus, only the third component of the interdependence of regional state security— mutual dependence generated by transnational threats to all—invites actors to cooperate in the national security sphere. As distinct from Western Europe, two components of mutual dependence mentioned earlier (the material-resource and perceptional-behavioral) interfere with regional cooperation in the Caucasus. This suggests that settlement of the regional security problems may raise cooperation to the highest level. These problems are of a transnational nature: organized crime, ecology, drug trafficking, and, viewed as less important, international terrorism and the proliferation of WMD.

The future of regional cooperation within the Caucasian security complex should not cause pessimism: cooperation in the face of transnational threats is an absolute necessity, rather than the subjective desires or ad hoc political maneuvering of an individual state. The developing international system will inevitably aggravate transnational threats and push the states toward closer cooperation. Closer contacts in this sphere will invigorate positive and mutually advantageous cooperation among the states and societies. On the one hand, this will defuse, to a certain extent, the old negative perceptional ideas feeding the security dilemma. On the other, the so-called "spill over" mechanism (that extends mutually advantageous cooperation in one sphere to other spheres) identified within the neo-functionalist conceptual perspective will be realized.[29]

Institutionalization of Regional Cooperation in the Caucasian Security Sphere

The absence of institutions designed to bring together all members of the regional system is one of the key factors interfering with the broadest possible regional cooperation in the Caucasus. B. Coppieters has written on that score: "The lack of regional institutional arrangements [in the Caucasus] favoring associative forms of security led to attempts [by regional states] to address the security threats through balance of power policies."[30] Today, the region lacks a common security complex, an integral

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[26] See: A.L. Ross, op. cit.
[27] K.N. Waltz, op. cit., p. 186.
[28] R. Jervis, op. cit., p. 171.
[29] The initial conception used the mechanism to explain how cooperation in economy, science, and technology, and the dividends it produces, promoted cooperation in the political and military spheres (see: Ph. Schmitter, "Three Neo-Functionalist Hypothesis about International Integration," *International Organization,* Vol. 23, Issue 1, Winter 1969, pp. 162-165).
[30] B. Coppieters, "A Regional Security System for the Caucasus."

institutional arrangement and a security regime approved of and accepted by all the countries. Life has shown that the CIS, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, GUUAM, and the Caucasian Four are not effective enough when addressing these key problems, either because these structures are amorphous, or because they cannot pool together and coordinate the efforts of all the interested actors. What is more, the key trends of regional institutionalization divide the regional actors rather than bring them together.

Short-term efficiency of the common regional structures in the sphere of security aside, their continued functioning in the sphere of transnational problems and as a mechanism of multilateral cooperation may in the long term be instrumental in decreasing (or even neutralizing) the structural and relational obstacles to broader regional cooperation in the security sphere. Anyone who wants to know how this can be done can easily find the answer both within the constructivist conceptual perspective and in the more general approach exercised by the liberal institutional theory. The classical "security dilemma" and "prisoner dilemma" are based on the deficit of reliable information about the opponent's real intentions. The realists' approach says: "In an uncertain anarchic world, states must assume the worst particularly about others' intentions."[31] According to Robert Keohane, one of the prominent representatives of liberalism, international institutions can provide their members with reliable information about an opponent's real military spending, or about the potential force of an alliance's members, thus lowering the barriers to their cooperation.[32] The mechanisms of military-political cooperation within NATO serve as an example of the practical value of this function; one of the key documents related to the alliance's cooperation with the Central and East European states, the Partnership for Peace program, says in its first section that the alliance should promote "facilitation of transparency in national defense planning and budgeting processes."[33]

At the same time, supporters of liberalism do not limit themselves to pointing to the information function of international institutions. According to R. Keohane and L. Martin, sanctions can be used to punish those member countries that try to manipulate other countries inclined to cooperative approaches,[34] and the function of coordination of interstate cooperation can be used for the same purpose.[35] Positive cooperation among all members of the Caucasian security complex can be very much promoted by common regional arrangements.

It should be said that the regional actors are growing more and more aware of the fact that they need a common Caucasian structure of cooperative security. This was what President of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliev was talking about at the 1999 OSCE Summit in Istanbul[36]; similar ideas were offered by President of Armenia Robert Kocharian and President of Turkey Suleyman Demirel (Stability Pact for the Caucasus).[37]

There were several possible models of such a structure:

(1) Balladur's Stability Pact under which Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia were invited to settle the Nagorny Karabakh and Abkhazian conflicts in exchange for larger EU aid and a promise of EU membership;

(2) the Stability Pact for the Balkans that invited the EU, the U.S., Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, and other Black Sea and Caspian coastal states to join a broad discussion of regional policies and cooperation prospects;

(3) virtual EU membership, within which the European Union will be more actively involved in progressively integrating Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan into its economic and security

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[31] R.O. Keohane, L.L. Martin, op. cit., p. 43.

[32] See: Ibid., pp. 43, 46.

[33] *Partnership for Peace: Framework Document issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council*, Brussels, 10 January, 1994 [http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c940110b.htm].

[34] See: R.O. Keohane, L.L. Martin, op. cit., p. 49.

[35] See: Ibid., p. 45.

[36] See: *Nash vek,* 7 April, 2000.

[37] See: M. Emerson, "Approaches to the Stabilization of the Caucasus," *Caucasian Regional Studies,* Vol. 5, Issue 1&2, 2000 [http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/crs/crs_2000/crs00_emm01.html].

spheres; it also offers its constitutional packages on the settlement of ethnopolitical conflicts in the region;

(4) the EU Caucasian dimension will be extended to include Turkey, while Russia is invited to co-operate for the sake of common goals, development, stability, and security in the region.[38]

Finally, there was also the fifth model supplied by CEPS in May 2000, according to which

(a) the conflicts in Nagorny Karabakh, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia should be settled;

(b) the region should acquire the regime of regional security under the OSCE aegis;

(c) efforts to create a South Caucasian community should be started;

(d) the southern "cooperation expanse" between Russia and the EU should be extended;

(e) the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization should be given a more important role to play; and

(f) the legal structure of cooperation in the oil and gas sphere should be improved.[39]

All these models look very attractive, yet hard to implement, because there is no unified approach to all key details (concerning the principles of settling main regional conflicts, participants in the regional structure of cooperative security,[40] and the foreign military presence in the region). Azerbaijan was against this military presence,[41] which contradicts the approaches of Armenia and Russia. In fact not only the South Caucasian states but, to a great extent, the centers of power outside the Caucasian security complex were not ready to put any of the suggested models into practice. The European Union is invited to become the external stabilizer with varied functions, ranging from large-scale economic aid to almost drawing the South Caucasian states into its political, economic, and security sphere. Is the EU prepared to play this role?

The answer requires a clear idea about certain factors. First, the European Union has no strong interests in the region—they are mainly economic and are not directly related to the security issue. The dynamics in the security sphere and structural changes in the Caucasian security complex have practically nothing to do with EU security. Second, despite its considerable progress in economics in the military-political respect, the European Union does not have the necessary internal homogeneity and coordination to be considered an individual and comparatively independent source of military-political force that can be concentrated on implementing decisions on any of the settlement scenarios in the Caucasus.[42] This became absolutely obvious during the efforts to settle the situation in the Balkans in the early 1990s, in particular in Bosnia. It was America that used force to help stem the armed struggle and effectively implement the 1995 Dayton Agreements. And this given that the security of most West European states depended on the situation in the Balkans to a much greater extent than it currently depends on the Caucasian developments.

None of the above models has a chance of being transformed into an effective mechanism of regional security in the short-term perspective, because the implementation of any of them in the near future will not successfully address the main task of neutralizing the negative dynamics of security relations. Theoretically, these negative aspects can be more or less promptly neutralized with the use of external force, the mechanism that B. Buzan called "overlay."[43] Here the situation can be compared with that in

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[38] See: M. Emerson, "Approaches to the Stabilization of the Caucasus," *Caucasian Regional Studies,* Vol. 5, Issue 1&2, 2000 [http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/crs/crs_2000/crs00_emm01.html].

[39] See: M. Emerson, N. Tocci, E. Prochorova, "A Stability Pact for the Caucasus in Theory and Practice—A Supplementary Note," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies,* Vol. 1, No. 3, September 2001, p. 117.

[40] On the one hand, there was no agreement on whether Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorny Karabakh, and Chechnia should participate in this structure along with the regional states; on the other, there were doubts about Iran's possible involvement and its status.

[41] This was formulated by President Heydar Aliev at the Istanbul OSCE Summit in 1999 (see: M. Emerson, op. cit.).

[42] This is precisely why the EU is not considered an independent external component of the Caucasian security complex (see: B. Coppieters, "Conclusions: The Caucasus as a Security Complex," pp. 215-225; S.E. Cornell, op. cit., pp. 396-400.)

[43] B. Buzan, op. cit., pp. 219-220.

the Balkans; there is every reason to believe that without the resolute interference of the U.S. and NATO in the Balkans, the conflict dynamics of the relations among the local states and other ethnopolitical units could not have been stemmed.

C o n c l u s i o n

In the long term, neutralization of the negative security dynamics in the Caucasus is rooted in the natural evolution of the relations among the local nations; and the intensity of this evolution will be determined by the scope of positive and mutually advantageous cooperation at the level of society. Even the partial implementation of the institutional structure of cooperation in the security sphere and an adequate security regime will, in the long term, create positive trends within the Caucasian security complex and will, at the same time, gradually extend the boundaries of regional cooperation in this sphere.