

No peace no war: the Western role in the Caucasian conflicts

Mgr. Zinaida Bechna, Ph.D.

IREn5019 No War, No Peace: Frozen Conflicts in
the Caucasus

13.12.2020

The Caucasus

- All states are small,
- located in the same geopolitical space
- in all countries are unresolved regional conflicts,
- All were part of the Soviet Union during the same period,
- are currently countries in transformation.
- -significant differences in the development of these countries' attitudes towards the transatlantic Alliance.

The Caucasus

- The Caucasus forms the hub of an evolving geostrategic and geo-economic system that stretches from NATO Europe to Central Asia and Afghanistan. It provides unique transit corridors for Caspian energy supplies and Central Asian commodities to the Euro-Atlantic community, as well as direct access for allied forces to bases and operational theaters in the Greater Middle East and Central Asia.
- projecting Western power and values along with security into Central Asia and the Greater Middle East.
- security assistance, state-consolidation efforts, and promotion of energy projects.
- new-type security threats associated with international terrorism, mass-destruction-weapons proliferation, arms and drugs trafficking.

NATO and the Caucasus: History of Mutual relations

- North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC).
- Partnership for Peace
- first dividing line in the region:
- Tashkent agreement
- Organization of the Collective Security Treaty 2002.

Armenia

- 1994 - PfP
- 2002 - PARP
- In 2003 - the military exercise "Cooperative Best Effort".
- 2008 on the territory of Armenia was held exercises "Cooperative Longbow" and the command staff exercises "Cooperative Lancer.
- Individual Partnership Plan (IPP) - exercises, peacekeeping missions, various educational programs, logistical support, budget planning, operational capabilities and increase public awareness.
- Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) was between NATO and Armenia signed on 16 December 2005.

Azerbaijan

- Azerbaijan acceded to the Individual Partnership Action Plan in May 2004.
- IPAP become a major tool for strengthening political dialogue with NATO and implementing reforms throughout the defense and security sector of Azerbaijan.
- Since 2010 Third IPAP.

Azerbaijan

Table 2: Azerbaijan's Contribution to PFP

Quantity	Asset
1	Helicopter Unit (2 Mi8s)
1	Training Center for Battalion/ Brigade Level for Peacekeeping Exercises
1	Air Traffic Control Services for Overflight Rights Granted to NATO Member States
1	Airport Facilities and Services for NATO Aircraft

Source: Azerbaijan's Individual Partnership Plan, 2000-01,
Part II - Partners Forces & Assets Available

Georgia

- Between 1999-2003 the Georgian territory held various educational programs, including Medceur-00, Coop, Partner-01, Best Effort-02-02 Eternity, Medceur/Rescuer-03, Medceur/Recuer-05 and Eternity-05 .
- Involved in the fight against terrorism by the Partnership Action Plan on Combating Terrorism (PAP-T) and the Partnership Action Plan for Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIP).

Georgia

Table 3. Georgia's Contribution to PFP

Quantity	Asset
1	Army Company for Peacekeeping
1	Combat Engineer Platoon
1	Training Area
2	Airfields
1	Military Harbor (Poti)

Source: Georgia's Individual Partnership Plan, 2000-01,
Part II - Partners Forces & Assets Available

Georgia

- Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) for Georgia was adopted at the NATO summit in Prague on the 21st November 2002.
- New York - 21st September 2006 - ID
- Summit in Bucharest - 2008.

NATO-Georgia Commission (NGC)

- First deepen political dialogue and cooperation between NATO and Georgia,
- Second control the process, which was initiated at the Summit in Bucharest
- 3rd coordinate assistance for the rehabilitation of the Alliance of Georgia after the August events and
- 4th strengthen political and economic reforms in the aspect of Euro-Atlantic integration

NATO's Secretary General visited the South Caucasus 2012





Russia-Georgian Armed Conflict

- After Georgia lost a bruising war with Russia in 2008—shortly after its NATO membership application was put on hold earlier that year—Moscow carved out protectorates in legal Georgian territory, rendering it technically under occupation.

Georgia

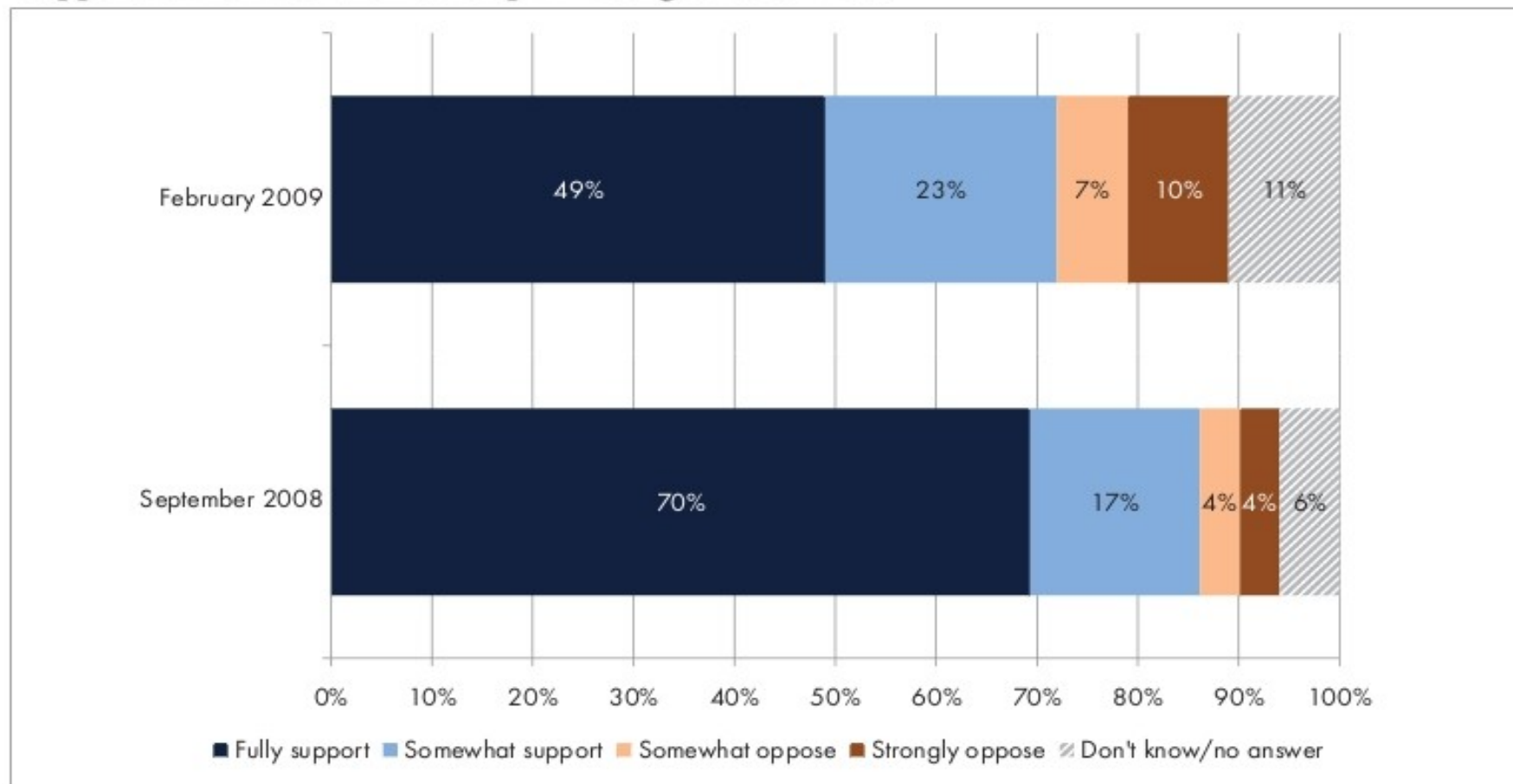
- Were it to join today, Georgia's nearly 1,600 troops in Afghanistan would be the sixth-largest contributor to the ISAF operation, where it already outranks contingents from big powers like France (459), Canada (950), and Spain (1,249).
- Georgia's defense spending, at 2.9 percent of GDP, is nearly a full point higher than the baseline 2 percent target set by NATO, which only the United States, the UK, France, Greece and Turkey see fit to observe—to the growing consternation of Alliance brass.

- Since coming to power in October, the Georgian Dream (GD) coalition government has sought to turn the balance of this equation in Georgia's favor. In this regard, the new government has made overtures to Russia and embarked on a military-reform program in an effort to reduce the prospect of another war and bolster its case for NATO membership.
- Recognizing that the often bellicose tone towards Moscow struck by the previous United National Movement (UNM) government had done little to advance Tbilisi's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, the Georgian Dream government is pushing to normalize ties with Russia. This also happens to dovetail well with GD's drive to create new, broader-based economic-development opportunities.

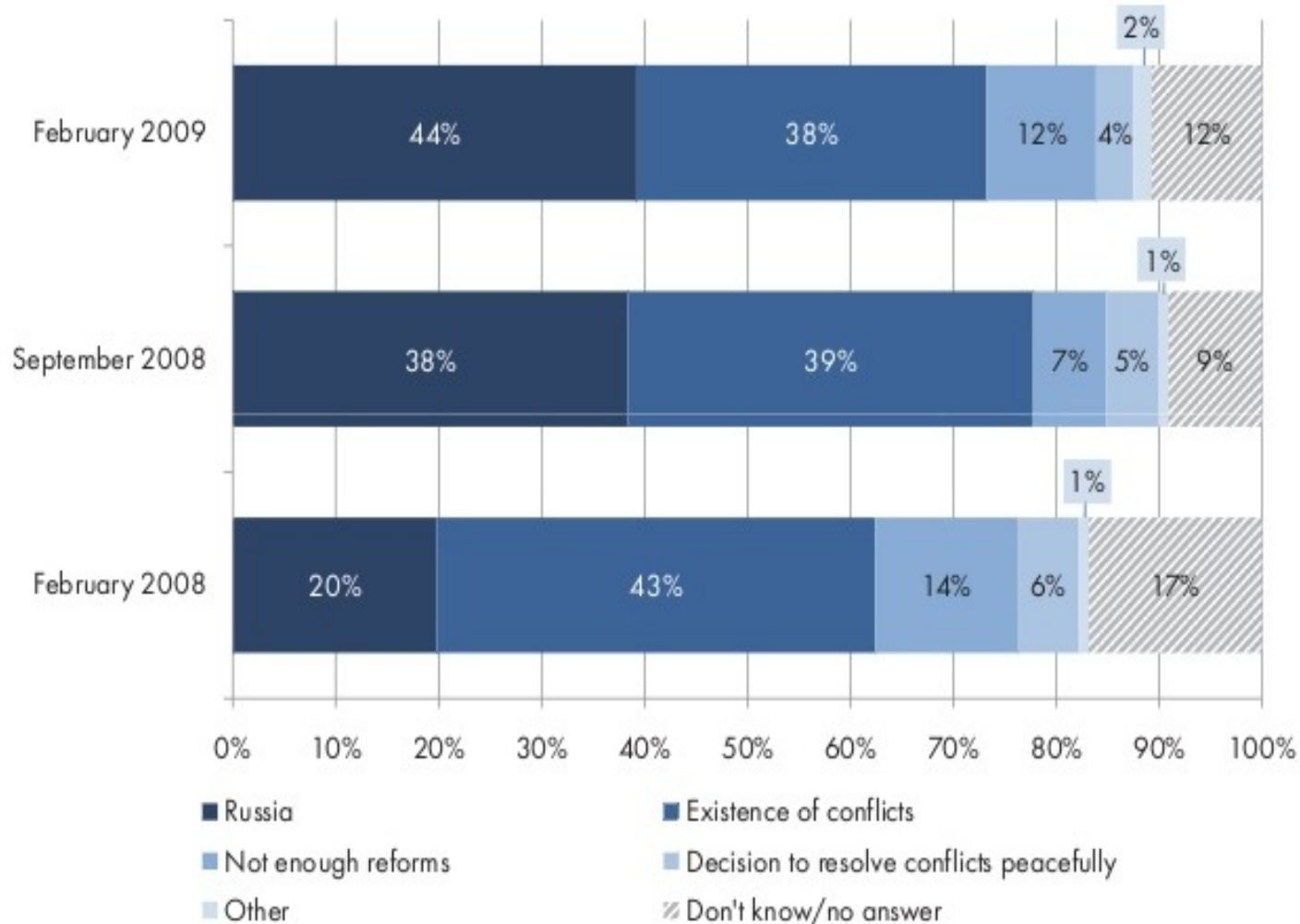
- Learning lessons from the 2008 war, in which heroics by individual units were overshadowed by systemic command and control breakdowns, Alasania has authorized a study of 2008's operational failures to inform long-term planning.
- The ministry is also taking the Atlantic Alliance's "smart defense" doctrine to heart. The military is phasing out its post-Soviet, mixed-conscription force structure in favor of an all-professional, Western-trained active force supported by a more robust, tri-level reserve system.

Georgian Popular Opinion on NATO Membership and the Relationship with the West

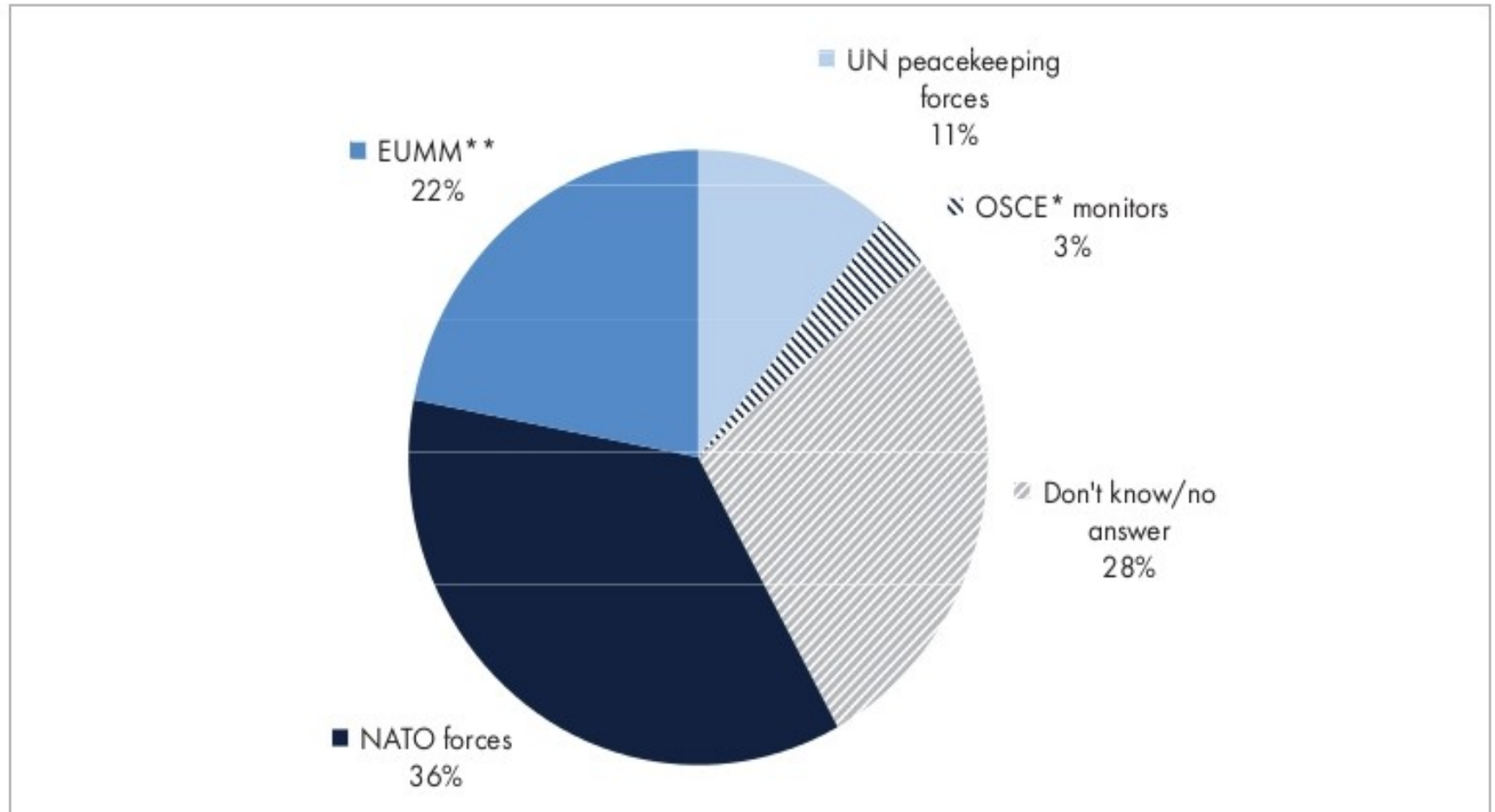
Support for NATO Membership in Georgia 2008–2009



What Hinders Georgia's Membership in NATO?

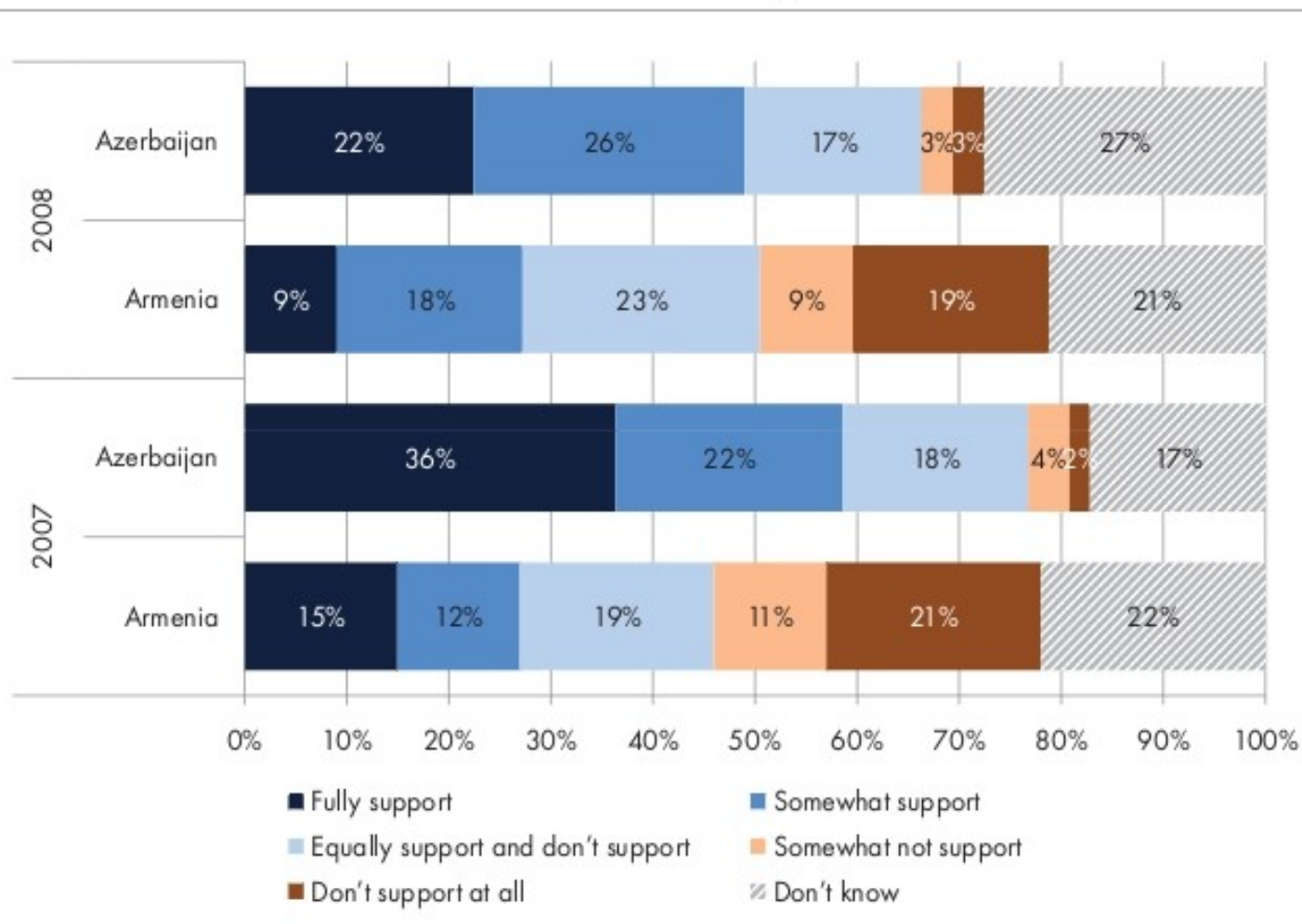


Who Can Best Provide Security for Georgia in Conflict Areas?

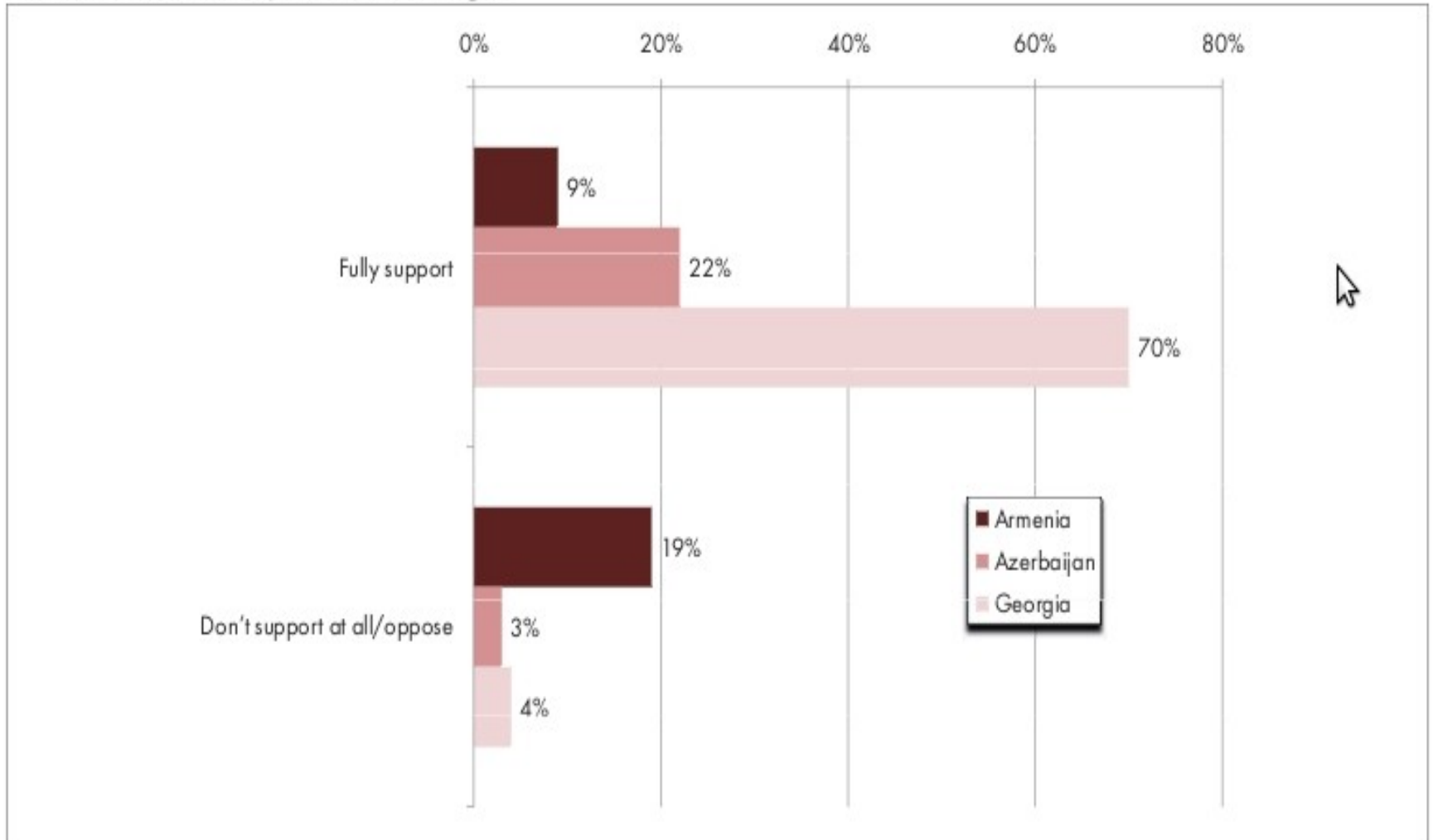


Extent of Popular Support for NATO Membership in the South Caucasus

Support for NATO Membership in Armenia and Azerbaijan 2007–2008



Percentage of Respondents Who Fully Support And Who Fully Oppose NATO Membership in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia



EU's role in the South Caucasus

- In 90, the South Caucasus was a “distant neighbour for the EU.
 - Mutual cooperation at this time was based on regional funding programs within the Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS), the EU Food Security Program and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), as well as Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) and Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE). Despite all of these programs, EU considers the South Caucasus the “region of the frozen conflicts.”
 - 2003 – year when EU thinking towards the region began to change:
 - appointment of Special Representative to the region
 - inception of the Wider Europe Initiative
 - prospect and process of EU enlargement towards the Central and Eastern Europe.
- EU – more powerful security actor – direct role in the regional conflict.

EU's role in the South Caucasus

- EU – “silent disciplining” power
- To provide security – employing the “stabilization/cooperation/partnership” formula.
- EU-as-a-framework – export models of governance, law and policies to its periphery
or
EU-as-an-actor – exert its influence through negotiation and creating incentives for the peaceful resolutions of conflict.

EU's role in the South Caucasus

- 1989 Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the former Soviet Union.
- EU's policy – aid and assistance for post-war reconstruction (aid for physical survival of the population, humanitarian and food aid – 84% of total grants in 1996).
- 1999 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement – technical areas of cooperation, funded through TACIS national projects and TRACECA and INOGATE.
- TACIS – transition towards a market economy and the building of democratic institutions.

EU's role in the South Caucasus

2004/2007 enlargements – domino-effect on EU policies towards the South Caucasus.

By 2003 – civilian and military crisis management operations – Rapid Reaction Force, Civilian and Military Headline Goals 2008 and 2010.

South Caucasus – test-case where the EU could prove its credentials in civilian and military crisis management.

EU's role in the South Caucasus

- Long-term stability projection through intensified financial assistance and the *European Neighbourhood Policy (Action Plan)*, the *Black Sea Synergy* and *Eastern Partnership* (March 2009).
- The ENP, BSS and EaP:
 1. More enhanced relationship and contribute to the transformation to EU models of governance.
 2. Platforms of bilateral dialogue between the conflict parties and the south region.

Eastern Partnership

- The first Eastern Partnership (EaP) summit in Prague on 7 May 2009
- leaders from the EU Member States, EU institutions and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to launch this **new framework of reinforced bilateral and multilateral cooperation**.
- deepening of political and economic relations,
- more energy security,
- increased mobility and
- pro-democratic and market oriented reforms in partner countries.

Eastern Partnership

- The Eastern Partnership was proposed by the European Commission in December 2008.
- - **Association Agreements** (for those partners that have made sufficient progress towards democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and principles of market economy, sustainable development and good governance);
- - better **economic integration with the EU** (with the objective of establishing deep and comprehensive Free Trade Areas), as well as free trade among the partners themselves, with a longer term goal to develop a Neighbourhood Economic Community;
- - **increased mobility through visa facilitation and readmission agreements** (with gradual steps towards full visa liberalisation)
- - strengthened **energy security** cooperation, including through support to investment in infrastructure, better regulation, energy efficiency and more efficient early warning systems to prevent disruption of supply;
- - improved **administrative capacity** of partner countries through jointly decided Comprehensive Institution-Building Programmes, financed by the EU;
- - specific **programmes addressing economic and social development** in the partner countries, aimed at reducing disparities of wealth between regions which can undermine stability; - additional financial support of € 350 million for the period till 2013, plus the redeployment of €250 million bringing the total for the implementation of the policy to €600 million.

EU's role in the South Caucasus

After 2008: EU established a monitoring mission to Georgia and launched an international fact-finding mission to investigate the origins and the course of the conflict.

After the Russian-Georgian armed conflict, EU acquired a role of a security actor by enhancing the Russian-Georgian six point peace agreement, supporting territorial integrity of Georgia and established the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM), which remains the only international mission in Georgia.

The EU is also engaged in the “Geneva discussions.”

Together with UN and OSCE, the EU is also hosting the peace talks between Russia and Georgia in Geneva.

Vilnius summit 28-29 November 2013

- A signed Association Agreement offers Georgia the possibility of closer economic integration provided Tbilisi adjusts its legal, judicial, and economic systems to fit certain EU norms.



Vilnius summit 28-29 November 2013

- Azerbaijan continues to negotiate for its own Association Agreement with the bloc.
- The European Union and Azerbaijan signed an agreement to facilitate the procedures for issuing short-stay visas.
- “This will allow citizens from Azerbaijan to travel more easily to the Schengen area, as well as for EU citizens to travel to Azerbaijan,” said Cecilia Malmström, the European commissioner for Home Affairs.
- “This is a very tangible result of the Eastern Partnership and will further promote interaction between citizens of the EU and Azerbaijan.”

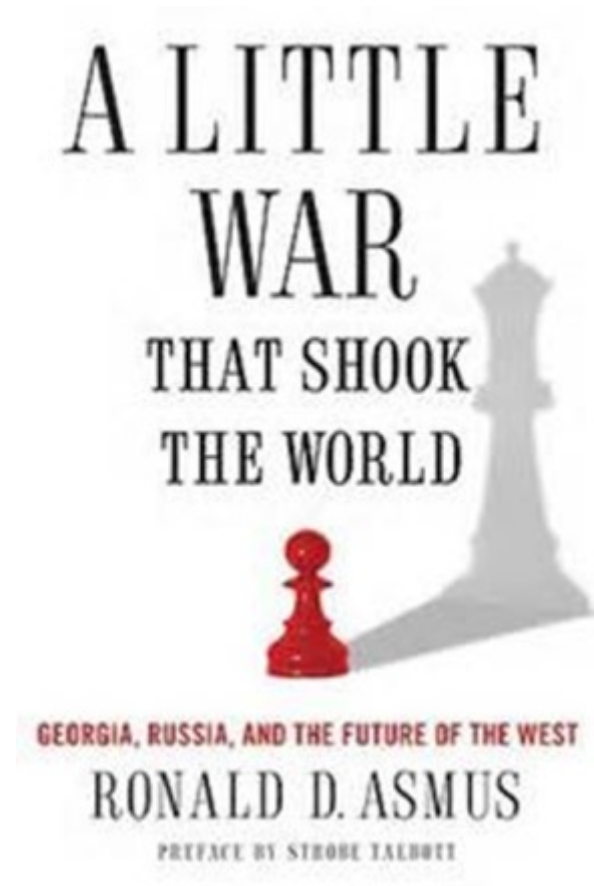


?

- What will happen to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, since they are totally dependent on Russia for their political, military, and economic survival?
- How can Tbilisi overcome the disadvantage of being a small country with a small military with 20 percent of its de jure territory garrisoned by its giant neighbor to the north, Russia?

South Caucasus – “broken region”

- The contradictions between Turkey and Armenia, between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and between Georgia and Russia – entail differing foreign-policy orientation and different systems of security.



Between Geopolitics and Transformation

- Today the EaP faces a **double challenge**:
- 1) The transformation it was meant to bring about has largely failed to materialize, whereas a conflict with Russia for which it was not designed has come to the fore. As a consequence, the EaP region has become more instead of less divided.
- 2) The EU's agenda has been increasingly overshadowed and contradicted by a largely geopolitical concern: competition with Russia.
- It did not contain instruments for supporting its partners against Russian reprisals.
- The EU's strength tends to lie more in its transformational powers than in a capacity to act strategically.
- the EU usually has difficulties setting and following coherent objectives, to say nothing of responding flexibly to the interactive nature of strategy.
- In times of crisis, this condemns the EU to a **reactive** rather than **pro-active role**.

Between Geopolitics and Transformation

- Russia, following a **“realist” understanding of international relations**, views the conflict as a **zero-sum game for power and influence** and expects its interests to be respected.
- For the EU, the EaP is more **about promoting development** than about geopolitical interests. Consequently, the EU rejected the EaP as a reason for conflict. Russia, for its part, likely misread EU communication on the EaP as assurances that EU interference in the post-Soviet neighborhood would be limited.
- On a fundamental level, the **EU’s strategic culture is built on rejecting the hierarchical relationships of traditional power politics and spheres of influence**. Instead, it aims for **cooperation** that seeks common gains in terms of liberal values. This culture is what led EU politicians to deny the legitimacy of Russian interference or even its objections to the EaP.
- A major weakness of the EaP is thus that it was ill-equipped from the start for what turned out to be unavoidable competition and eventual conflict with its largest neighbor to the east.

Between Geopolitics and Transformation

- Russia, however, can provide not only considerable short-term benefits – such as reduced energy prices and loans – to those same countries but also short-term disincentives. These include imposing trade sanctions, limiting access to migrant workers, negative propaganda by influential Russian media, sponsoring domestic opposition, and, not least, raising tensions in separatist regions, supporting armed insurgents, and sponsoring outside intervention.
- **Russia dismisses EU values as a mere pretext for advancing geopolitical ambitions, while the EU dismisses Russia's objections as illegitimate.**
- The form of the current conflict, like its causes, has been asymmetrical. **Exploiting EU weaknesses, Russia responded to EU soft power with instruments of hard power.** At the same time it developed and employed its own soft power in the form of effective propaganda while the EU was distracted by crises over the euro, refugees, and, finally, the Brexit referendum.
- Overall, Russia's policies look more reactive than strategic.

Between Geopolitics and Transformation

- **Russia, moreover, has been no more successful than the EU in achieving its objectives.** Only in the case of Armenia did it manage to turn the country away from European integration and toward Eurasian integration.
- The most important impact of Russia's opposition to the EaP is less direct: that the "Russian factor" has strengthened the leverage of vested interests within EaP countries, helping these deadlock the reform process, particularly in Ukraine and Moldova.
- Geopolitical competition with Russia has pushed the EU into supporting pro-EU governments regardless of their real reform records.

IOs in the Caucasus

- Potential of IOs:
- Now war: not allowing the conflicts to re-escalate;
- Democratization: transformation of political regimes to become more democratic than they are;
- Increase chances for their economic development;
- Emphases on soft security measures: the role of civil society.
- The EU must go beyond merely supporting reforms in the EaP and effectively take coresponsibility for them. This involves upgrading the principle of conditionality and getting involved more directly in implementation. By stressing the importance of human resources in state institutions and proposes concrete measures for appointing and retaining qualified personnel and, particularly, independent leaders for key law enforcement and regulatory bodies.

Conclusion

- The security deficit and fragile peace arraignment in the South Caucasus underlines the need for **internationalization of conflict resolution efforts**.
- Unfortunately, the role of the OSCE, NATO and UN has considerably declined.
- The EU has a new momentum and can contribute to revival of multilateral security engagements in this region: creation of multidimensional and coherent approach may keep the conflicts from escalating to “hot” wars.

