

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

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in the Caucasus
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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
- 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 Mi-8s)
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)

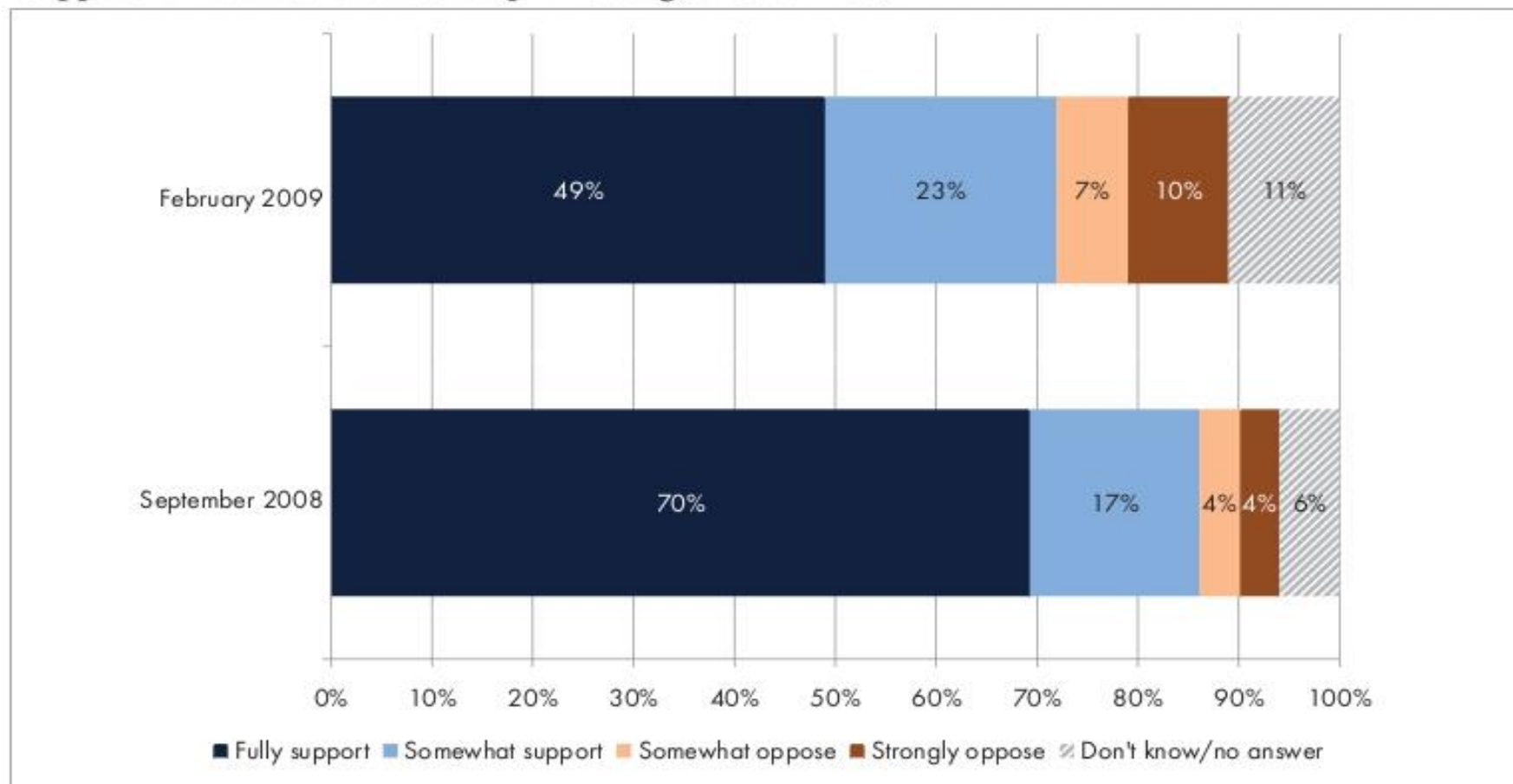
- First deepen political dialogue and cooperation between NATO and Georgia,
- Second control the process, which was initiated at the Summit in Bucharest
- 3rd coordinate assistance for the rehabilitation of the Alliance of Georgia after the August events and
- 4th strengthen political and economic reforms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

Russia-Georgian Armed Conflict

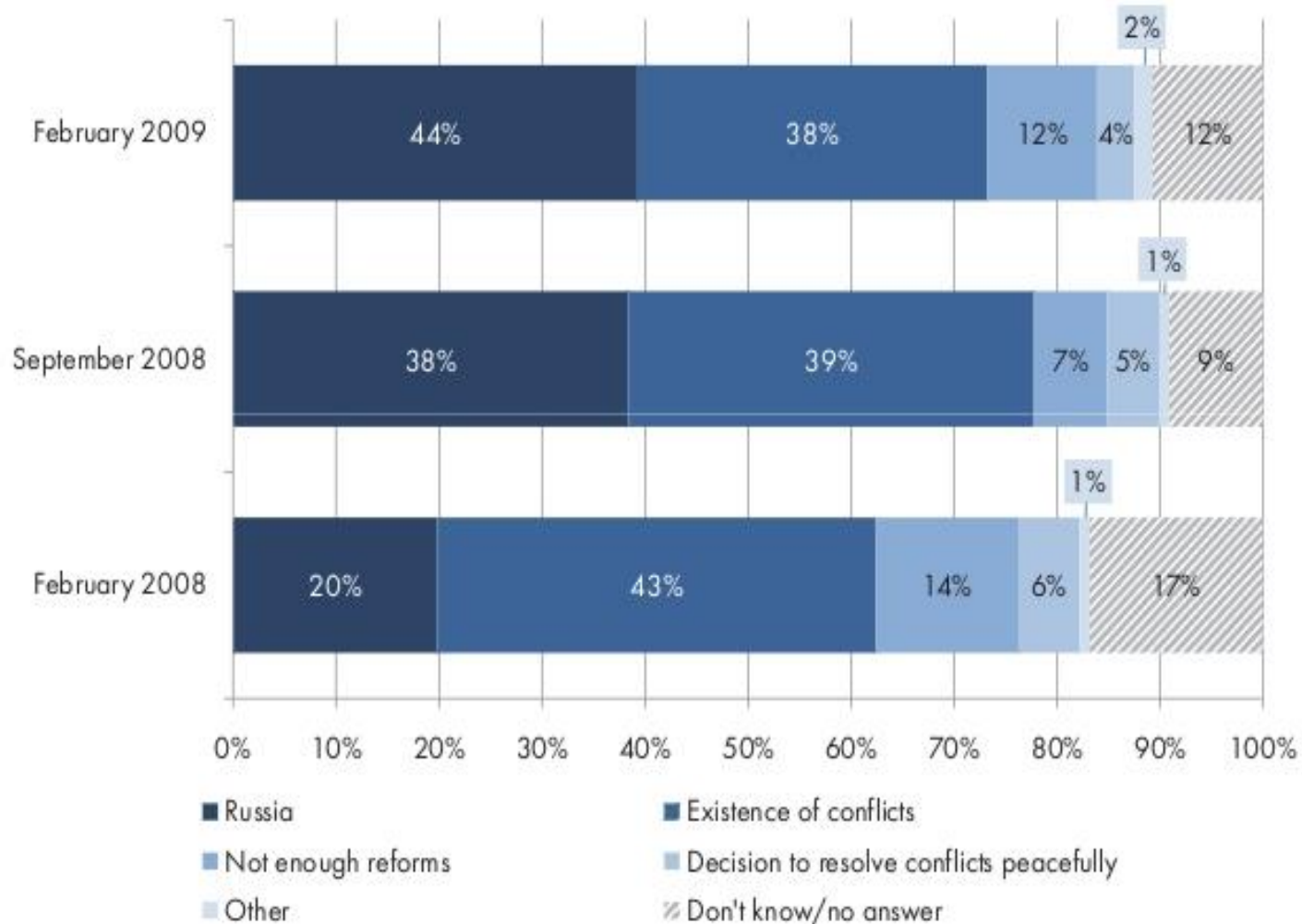
- After Georgia lost a bruising war with Russia in 2008—shortly after its NATO membership application was put on hold earlier that year—Moscow carved out protectorates in legal Georgian territory, rendering it technically under occupation.
- “smart defense” doctrine

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

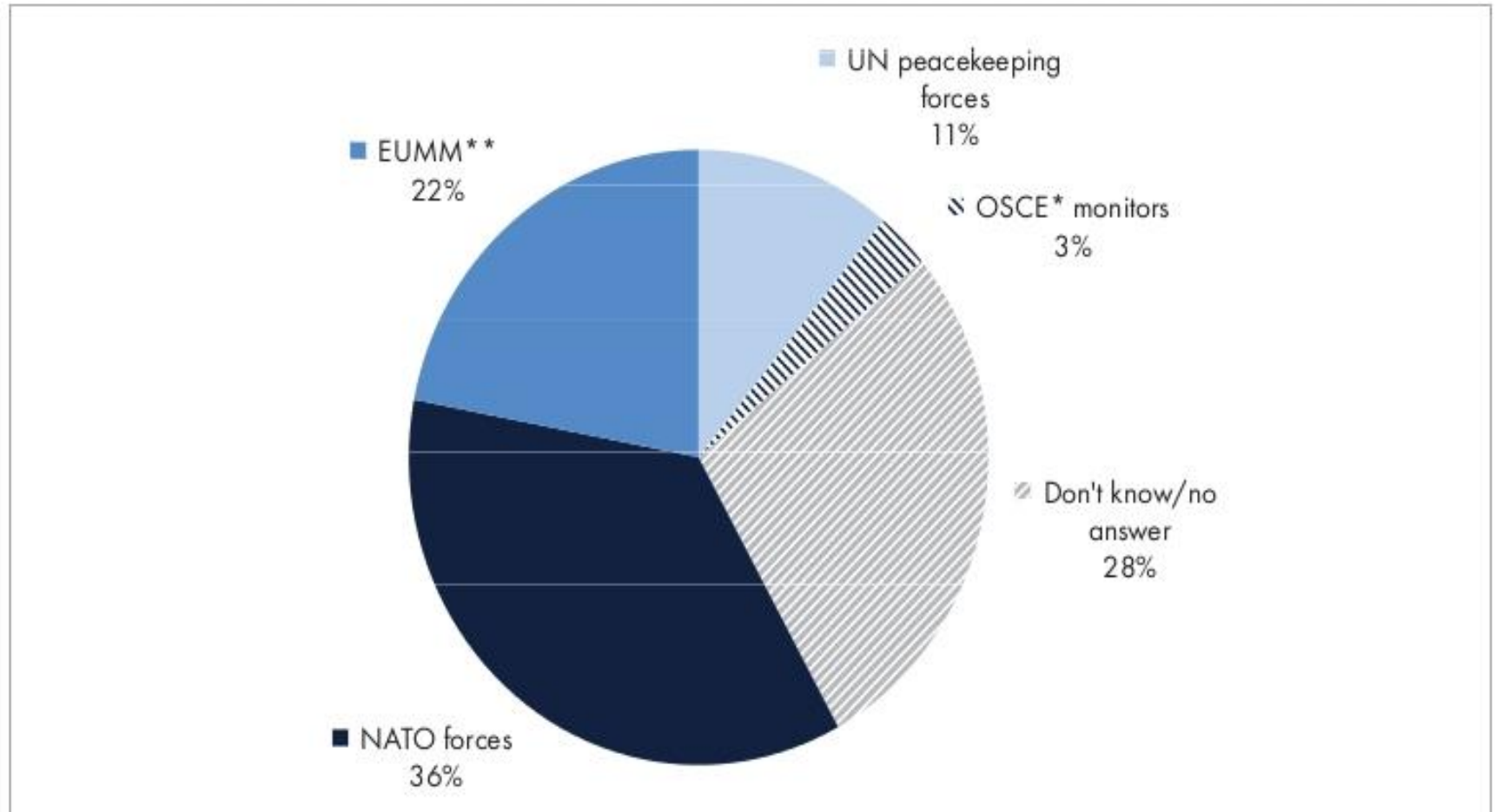
Support for NATO Membership in Georgia 2008–2009



What Hinders Georgia's Membership in NATO?

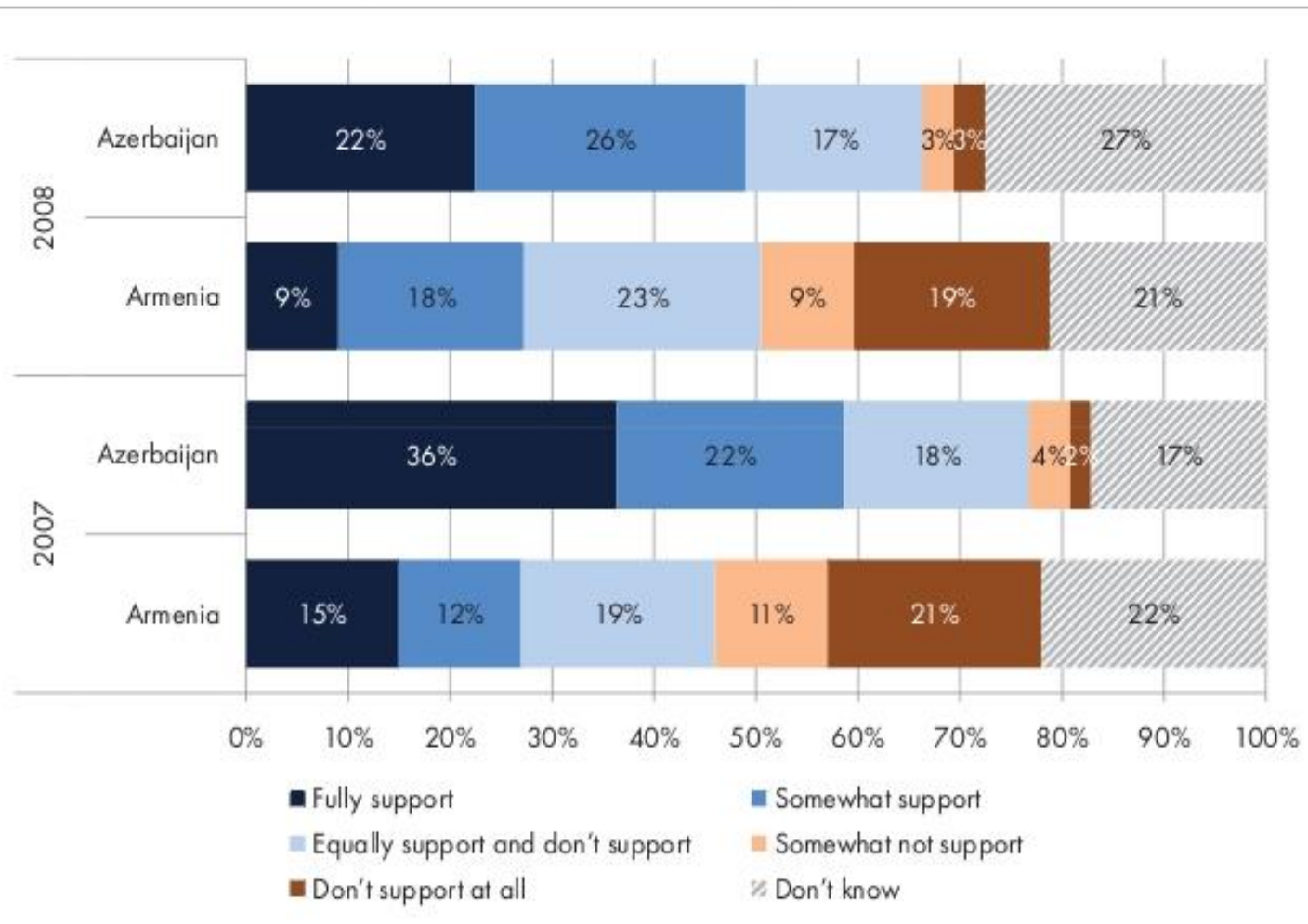


Who Can Best Provide Security for Georgia in Conflict Areas?

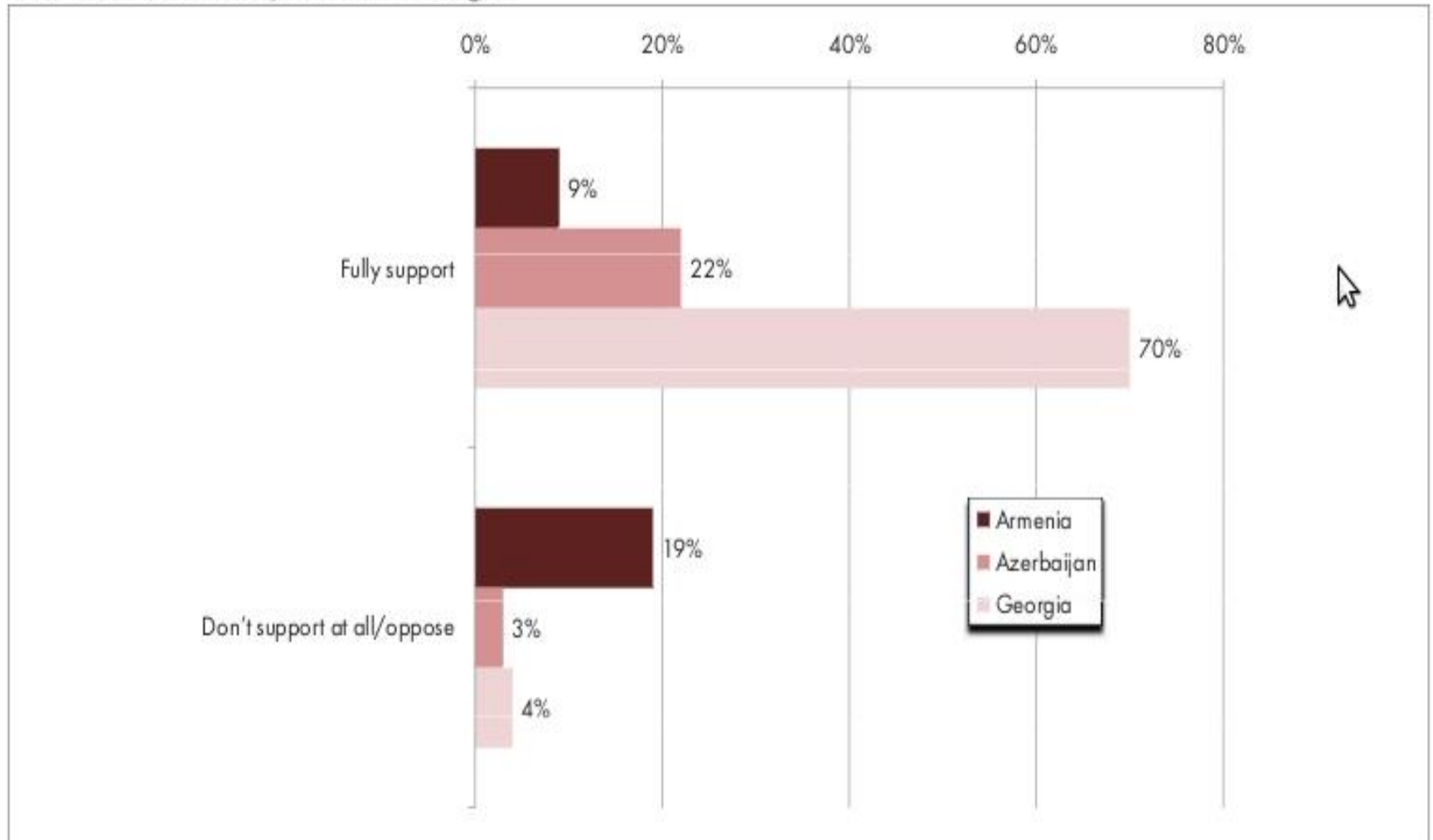


Extent of Popular Support for NATO Membership in the South Caucasus

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

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.”



The EU's Role and Strategic Shift

Deployed an unarmed civilian mission in Armenia in 2022 to monitor the volatile border with Azerbaijan.

Enhanced dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan under the leadership of European Council President Charles Michel.

Growing focus on Azerbaijan due to energy resource diversification, particularly gas supplies through the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC).

EU aims to reduce reliance on Russian energy and strengthen regional connectivity.

Challenges and Contradictions

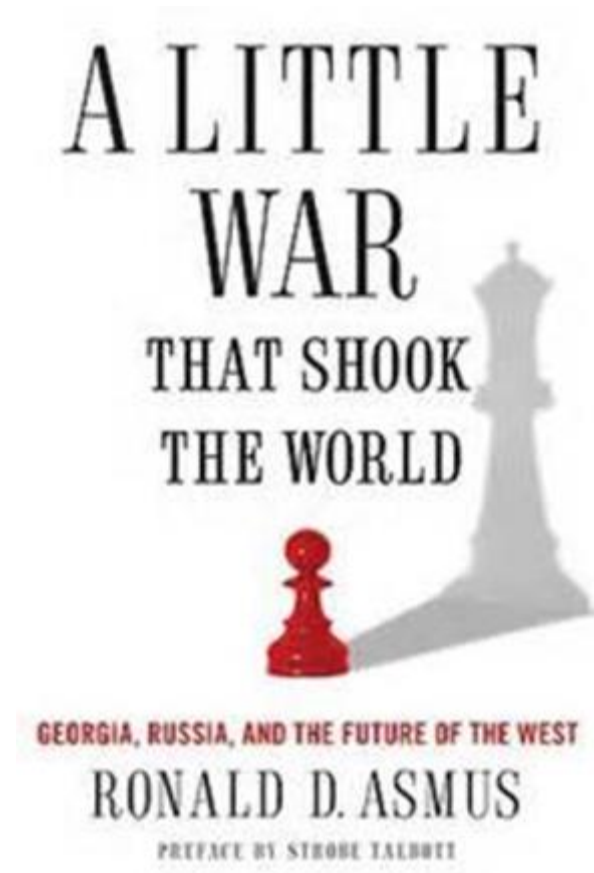
- **Contradictory Positions:** The EU's dual emphasis on Armenia's right to self-determination and Azerbaijan's territorial integrity creates tensions in its policy approach.
- **Limitations in Mediation:** Armenia has been cautious about EU involvement, wary of alienating Russia, while Azerbaijan questions EU neutrality.
- Lack of coordinated pressure on conflicting parties limits EU's influence.
- **Humanitarian and Regional Stability:** The Lachin Corridor blockade highlights ongoing issues with freedom of movement and access for conflict-affected populations.
- Despite EU-backed judicial measures, practical resolutions remain elusive.

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- 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.



Challenges of the Eastern Partnership (EaP)

Dual Challenge Facing the EaP:

1. **Unrealized Transformation:** The envisioned reforms have largely failed, while unintended conflict with Russia has intensified, deepening divisions in the region.
2. **Geopolitical Overshadowing:** The EU's developmental agenda is increasingly dominated by competition with Russia, for which the EaP was not designed.

EU's Strategic Shortcomings:

- Lack of tools to protect partners from Russian reprisals.
- Strength lies in transformation, but lacks coherent strategy and flexibility.
- Reactivity in times of crisis limits proactive engagement and strategic foresight.

EU's EaP vs. Russia's Realist Power Politics

Russia's Perspective:

- Views the conflict as a zero-sum game driven by power and influence.
- Demands respect for its interests in the post-Soviet space.
- Likely misinterpreted the EU's communication on the EaP as a sign of limited EU involvement in the region.

EU's Perspective:

- The EaP prioritizes development and liberal values over geopolitical competition.
- Rejects traditional power hierarchies and spheres of influence, focusing on cooperation for mutual benefits.
- Denies the legitimacy of Russian interference or objections to the EaP.

Russia's Tactics and Asymmetrical Conflict with the EU

Russia's Tools for Influence:

- **Short-Term Incentives:** Reduced energy prices and loans for cooperative states.
- **Short-Term Disincentives:** Trade sanctions, restricted access for migrant workers, domestic opposition sponsorship, and support for separatist regions and armed insurgents.
- **Soft Power Efforts:** Effective propaganda campaigns targeting EU weaknesses.

EU vs. Russia: A Clash of Narratives

- **Russia's Stance:** Dismisses EU values as a guise for geopolitical ambitions.
- **EU's Response:** Rejects Russia's objections as illegitimate interference.

Asymmetrical Conflict:

- **Russia's Strategy:** Combines hard power (military, economic coercion) and soft power (propaganda) to exploit EU vulnerabilities.
- **EU's Challenges:** Distracted by internal crises (eurozone issues, refugee influx, Brexit), limiting its response capacity.

Key Insight:

- Russia's actions appear more reactive than strategic, leveraging immediate opportunities rather than pursuing a cohesive long-term plan.

The Clash of Diffusions in Eastern Partnership Countries

- Countries in the "in-between zones" of EU and Russian influence are battlegrounds for the diffusion of political norms.
- Unstable "competitive authoritarianism" in EaP nations amplifies this clash.
- Domestic agency matters: Political actors use foreign support to complement—not substitute—their agendas.

Examples of Diffusion Dynamics:

- **Ukraine (2013):** Yanukovich's rejection of EU ties spurred democratization via the Revolution of Dignity.
- **Georgia (2023):** Rapid EU candidate status approval coincided with authoritarian backsliding, driven by local elites.

The Fragmentation of the Liberal International Order (LIO)

- The Russian invasion of Ukraine has accelerated the fragmentation of the LIO.
- Fragmentation includes challenges to universal norms, crises in global governance, and the return of spheres of influence.
- EU security policies face shifts from crisis management to territorial defense, exposing gaps in preparedness.
- Energy dependency on Russia underscores the EU's limited authority in energy security policy, further complicating the foreign policy agenda.

Mapping EU Responses to Fragmentation

- **Actorness Challenges:** Fragmentation has reduced preference cohesion among EU member states, authority to act, and capabilities to respond.
- Shifts in defense priorities (from external crisis management to internal territorial defense) expose limitations in strategic planning.

Worldviews Shaping Responses:

- **Nationalists:** Embrace fragmentation, advocating for sovereign decision-making over EU alignment.
- **Atlanticists:** Mixed views depending on U.S. leadership, leaning toward strengthened transatlantic ties or hedging strategies.
- **Europeanists:** Support strategic autonomy, envisioning the EU as an independent global power.

Mapping EU Responses to Fragmentation

- **Strategic Autonomy Dimensions:**
 - Political: Decision-making independence.
 - Operational: Capability to act.
 - Industrial: Building defense systems within the EU.

Implications:

- Divergent worldviews lead to varied strategies within the EU, complicating cohesive action.
- Strategic autonomy projects (e.g., joint defense initiatives) remain unevenly developed.

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.