

GUAM AND REGIONAL SECURITY PROBLEMS

GUAM-NATO COOPERATION: RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE STRATEGIC BALANCE IN THE CENTRAL CAUCASUS

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At the outset of this paper, it should be emphasized that although NATO is taking increased interest in the GUAM (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Moldova) member countries there is no formal relationship or cooperation between NATO and GUAM. The declaration of the GUAM summit held in Baku in

June 2007 announced a decision to intensify cooperation between the GUAM members and NATO, aimed at promoting democracy, stability and security and building closer ties with European and Euro-Atlantic structures. The first step aimed at intensifying cooperation involves the production of a series of joint papers by the

GUAM missions to NATO. The first of these joint papers, intended to inform the Alliance and its partners on GUAM developments, structure and policies, was recently released and dedicated to the foundation of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM (ODED—GUAM) and the 10th anniversary of GUAM. Georgia has taken the responsibility to coordinate the cooperation among GUAM member country delegations within the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

A leading member of the GUAM grouping, Georgia epitomizes the potential for cooperation between NATO and GUAM member states. Committed to gaining membership of the North Atlantic Alliance, it has taken serious steps to reform and develop its armed forces. However, while both are necessary conditions for a healthy relationship with NATO, they remain insufficient. As this article will argue, Georgia's government remain internally divided on the goal to join NATO, as it must contend with a difficult strategic environment and the views and influence of its powerful Russian neighbor. For these reasons, the Alliance's relationship with Russia, in particular as it impacts on the cooperation between the GUAM member states and NATO, is in need of readjustment. Ideally, such a readjustment will necessitate shedding the remnants of Cold War thinking and genuinely engaging with Russia on a new equal footing—recognizing that Russia too has a voice in the activities of the Alliance on its southern periphery.

On 6 and 9 March, 2007 both houses of the U.S. Congress approved the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007, supporting further NATO enlargement into the Western Balkans and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Washington's interest in promoting NATO membership for two members of GUAM, notably Georgia and Ukraine, increased markedly as a result of the Color Revolutions of 2003-2004. Although the U.S. decision may have influenced the attitude of other NATO member states on further expansion, problems and reservations remained in some key member states, including France and Germany.

Ukraine and Georgia, unlike the three Balkan states seeking NATO membership—Albania, Croatia and Macedonia—lack Stabilization and Association agreements, which are preconditional to any consideration of membership of the EU. NATO membership has proven a stepping stone into the EU throughout post-communist Europe, which is one of the reasons why Ukraine and Georgia are so interested in joining NATO. Internal political developments in Ukraine and Georgia have made the prospect of NATO membership more complex. The three Balkan states had Membership Action Plans with NATO since 2002, which are missing in the case of Ukraine and Georgia, although they have entered the Intensified Dialog on membership in 2005 and 2006, respectively.¹ Ukraine and Georgia are linked to some extent in the calculations of NATO planning staffs, reluctant to extend an invitation into a Membership Action Plan (MAP) only for Georgia, as this may send conflicting signals to both Kiev and Moscow on the position of the Alliance on future membership for Ukraine. These issues are complicated further by the difficulties in relations between the U.S./NATO and Russia, ranging from Moscow's opposition to the U.S. missile defense shield plans with site components close to the Russian border to Russia's withdrawal from the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty. Premature action by the Alliance on the issue of NATO enlargement to include Ukraine and Georgia may precipitate further problems emerging within the NATO-Russia Council.

Georgia has made political overtures toward the Alliance, aimed at bolstering its chances of securing membership at an early date, particularly through its commitment to Iraq, increasing its troop deployment there, after Ukraine withdrew its forces in 2005. Georgia's military commitment in Iraq is to the U.S., rather than NATO which has a minimal role, suggesting that by increasing its military role in Iraq, Georgia hoped to influence the U.S. in supporting its bid for NATO membership. Georgia has

¹ See: [<http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2006/12-december/e1214b.htm>].

also reportedly offered support to the U.S. missile defense shield project, as well as promoting a positive image of NATO membership which has widespread public support. However, Georgia's membership plans could be undermined by

the two frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Equally, internal political problems, highlighted by the events of November 2007, also pose questions on Georgia's readiness for membership.

Georgia's Relations with NATO

NATO-Georgia relations began in 1992, with Georgia joining the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997), after gaining independence. Cooperation deepened after Georgia joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program in 1994 and the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) in 1999. However, the Rose Revolution in 2003 served to focus on supporting Georgia's domestic reform process through the development of the Georgia's first Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO in 2004.² In addition to supporting reform, a key objective in NATO's cooperation with Georgia is to help the country's armed forces work together with its NATO counterparts in peacekeeping missions and crisis-management. Georgia has shown interest in such missions by contributing soldiers to the Kosovo Force (KFOR) since 1999 and its political and military support for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2004.

At NATO's November 2002 Prague summit, Individual Partnership Action Plans were opened to countries with the political will and ability to deepen their relationship with NATO. These two-year plans agreed between the Alliance and a partner country integrate into a cohesive whole their various cooperation mechanisms while ensuring that the assistance provided suit the domestic needs of the recipients. Each IPAP therefore delineates the cooperation objectives and priorities of a partner country, which are then matched with what NATO can specifically offer to meet them. These objectives cover general categories, including political and security issues; defense, and military issues; public information; science and environment; civil emergency planning; and administrative, protective security and resource issues. On 29 October, 2004, Georgia became the first country to agree an IPAP with NATO. Azerbaijan agreed one on 27 May, 2005, Armenia on 16 December 2005, Kazakhstan on 31 January, 2006, and Moldova on 19 May, 2006.³

Georgia's integration with NATO will be granted based on two main components. This involves a so-called performance-based criteria based on the results of the IPAP, while the second is a political decision based on concrete achievements, ranging from progress in civil-military relations (which cannot be objectively measured) to interoperability and progress in democracy (another contentious and difficult yardstick to measure).⁴ An IPAP Implementation Assessment visit, scheduled for 28-31 January, 2008 aimed at evaluating the current stage of the reform process in Georgia. In preparation for that visit, recognizing that the decision on extending a MAP to Georgia would be

² See: "NATO's Relations with Georgia," available at [<http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-georgia/index.html>].

³ See: "Individual Partnership Action Plans," 6 December, 2007, available at [<http://www.nato.int/issues/ipap/index.html>]; [<http://www.eu-nato.gov.ge/english/index.php?title=nato>]; S. Cornell, R. McDermott, W. O'Malley, V. Sochor, S. Starr, *Regional Security in the South Caucasus: The Role of NATO*, CACI, Washington D.C., 2004.

⁴ See: T. Yakobashvili, "Georgia's Path to NATO," in: *Next Steps for Forging a Euroatlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea*, ed. by R. Asmus, Washington, 2006, pp. 186-87.

inherently political, Georgia's defense officials engaged in presenting the positive merits of its armed forces for the benefit of western opinion.

Georgia's First Deputy Defense Minister Batu Kutelia recently confirmed that the armed forces remain a security priority for Georgia. He vociferously opposed any attempt to link the separatist issues facing Kosovo with Abkhazia, which resulted only in silence from President Saakashvili, and declared the right of the Georgian state to defend its territory should any part of Georgia be annexed. Despite the controversial events on 7 November, 2007, which exposed a very different façade of the Georgian government other than being viewed as a model of democracy, including the dispersal of opposition rallies and stopping the broadcasts of an opposition television channel, Kutelia assessed positively the possibility that Georgia would be granted NATO's MAP at the NATO summit in Bucharest, April 2008. In this context, ignoring the mixed progress in the area of democracy, he highlighted the prospect that Georgia's army will switch to service on a contract basis by late 2008, which could please NATO. Despite the concerted efforts of Georgia's government and the military, NATO refused to offer either Georgia or Ukraine MAPs at the NATO summit in Bucharest 2-4 April, 2008.⁵

The development of Georgia's armed forces has been largely facilitated by Washington. United States' security assistance efforts, aimed at bolstering the weak and corrupt Georgian armed forces, were intensified in 2002 with the introduction of the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP). This concentrated on the training of Georgian special forces in connection with their anti-terrorist capabilities, and brought the advantage of being time-phased and systematic. GTEP's comparative success in the context of other U.S. military assistance programs in the Central Caucasus in 2002-2004 precipitated another American initiative, as a follow up. The Georgia Sustain and Stability Operations Program (SSOP) was launched in 2005, with its first 18 months costing \$60 million. It was specifically designed in order to enhance the military capabilities of Georgia's armed forces to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. All training through SSOP was carried out by U.S. Army Special Forces, and the U.S. Marine Corps, for training two infantry battalions for service in Iraq, two logistics battalions, special units for Georgia's 1st Brigade, staff training for the 1st and 2nd Brigades, the Land Forces Command Staff, and the Operations Cell of the Georgian General Staff. Moreover, SSOP was aimed at furnishing Georgia with a cadre of trainers and staff to support additional personnel and peace support units.

⁵ The decision taken at the Bucharest NATO summit to decline the offer of MAPs to Georgia and Ukraine resulted largely from objections raised by Germany, France and Italy among others. Most support for the offer of MAPs came from eastern and Central European members of the Alliance (reminiscent of Rumsfeld's distinction between "new" and "old" Europe) (see: "NATO: No MAP for Georgia or Ukraine, But Alliance Vows Membership," *RFE/RE*, Prague, 3 April, 2008, available at [<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2008/4/F2301CAB-6E1D-4D3C-BAF5-37F0603F0357.html>]). Some analysts in the West suggested unrealistically that Germany's opposition to the MAPs was motivated by its close relations with Russia. Little objective discussion took place about either the objections of Russia or the strategic problems that could result from continued NATO eastward expansion. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov commented on talks held between Russia and NATO and the bilateral talks with the U.S. in Sochi after the NATO summit in Bucharest. A forthright exchange took place on the most obvious areas in which Moscow and Washington differ, ranging from the missile defense shield to the CFE Treaty and continued controversy about the declaration of independence by Kosovo. Despite this, Russia and NATO signed an agreement on cooperation over Afghanistan, with Moscow agreeing to provide a land transit corridor for humanitarian assistance to ISAF. However, future NATO expansion resulted in an impasse: "But I did not sense a readiness to understand our concerns with regard to NATO expansion. We regard NATO's unrestrained expansion as a serious political mistake. It will not strengthen global security. There are no obstacles to any country, including Ukraine or Georgia, involving its intellectual and other resources in the struggle against real common threats like international terrorism rather than invented ones. You certainly do not have to be a NATO member to do so" ("Russia's Lavrov Speaks to Paper about Russia-NATO-U.S. Summit," *Komsomolskaia pravda*, BBC Monitoring Service, Moscow, 8 April, 2008).

Tbilisi: Russia's Violations in Abkhazia

Georgia places great emphasis on its volatile relations with Russia, and the tension relating to “frozen conflicts” to advance its argument in favor of NATO membership. In particular, defense officials are keen to focus on “Russian violations” in Abkhazia. Kutelia’s following comments are typical of the nature of this tactic:

“Russia has been carrying out a lot of illegal actions on Abkhaz territory for a long time now. We can begin with, if only, the existence of the Gudauta base, military assistance to the Abkhaz de facto government, which, in addition to violating general international and good-neighborly norms, violates the decisions made by the CIS itself. By direct arms assistance, I mean the supply of weapons, including heavy equipment, which is in violation of the principles of the CFE Treaty recently suspended by Russia. Also, expert assistance, training courses that Russia holds for the de facto government. Against the background of all this, the situation with the unplanned rotation is yet another violation. From a military viewpoint, this rotation is not a catastrophe but from a legal viewpoint, it is a major violation which could have quite serious political repercussions. All of this has crossed all boundaries and, naturally, eliminated any degree of legitimacy of the peacekeeping operation that is underway there.”⁶

Indeed, Mikhail Saakashvili, during his election campaigning ahead of the presidential election on 5 January, 2008 declared his intention to reunite Georgia “whatever the cost.” This implied he may resort to the use of military force. His rhetoric did little to alleviate concerns amongst NATO members on Georgia’s commitment to resolve “frozen conflicts” by peaceful means. During his speech broadcast in full on Rustavi-2 TV on 3 January, 2008, he drew a comparison between Ajaria and Abkhazia: “I want to tell our brothers on the other side of the Inguri that at one time we were not allowed to cross the Choloki either. Today the Choloki is a symbol of Georgia’s unity. Tomorrow the Inguri will be a symbol of Georgia’s unity, no matter what the cost may be for all of us. Today the separatists told the people of Gali on TV: either Georgia or Abkhazia. I tell them: Georgia and Abkhazia within Georgia,” Saakashvili said.⁷

Bombing or “Gift From the Skies”?

After the incident in Tsitelubani, involving the alleged bombing of Georgian territory by a Russian military aircraft on 6 August, 2007, connection to the NATO air defense data exchange system was advanced rapidly by Georgian politicians as a necessity for preventing, dissuading future incidents of the kind. By 23 August, 2007, NATO announced that it was prepared to provide a number of its partners, including Georgia, with access to radar data exchange system. Carmen Romero, a deputy NATO spokesman stated this would only involve non-classified information, adding that this was consistent with agreements on integrating the NATO system with those of a

⁶ “Georgia Deputy Defense Minister on NATO Prospects, Army Development,” *24 Saati*, Tbilisi, 13 December, 2007, pp. 1, 4.

⁷ “Saakashvili Delivers Pre-Election Speech,” Rustavi-2 TV, Tbilisi, 3 January, 2008.

number of partners, Albania, Austria, Finland, Georgia, Macedonia and Ukraine, concluded in 2003. Romero denied any linkage between this initiative and the Georgian allegation, which Russia had strenuously denied.⁸

This process with NATO, which began several years ago, was therefore given a new impetus by the 6 August, 2007 incident. NATO positively assessed the technical capabilities of Georgia in this sphere during a visit in February 2007. However, even though Tbilisi was modernizing existing equipment and purchasing new NATO compatible equipment, it needed to successfully connect with the Turkish side, only then addressing obligatory issues relating to the legal and bureaucratic procedures enabling access to the NATO data exchange system. It was then planned to agree and approve to become a party to the relevant NATO Memorandum of Understanding. The Tsitelubani incident has, in a way, stimulated the process because the need for 26 NATO countries to have information on the air space control was put on the agenda. "Correspondingly, we made a request to our NATO colleagues to speed this up as it would save us from potential incidents in the future and would serve as a kind of restraining factor for Russia. This system has already been set up, and exchange of data is underway. The remaining bureaucratic procedures will be completed before Christmas holidays. NATO countries can already physically see our data but they cannot yet use them legally because this has not been confirmed by a document," Kutelia confirmed.⁹

Georgia's current military reform plans are outlined in its Strategic Defense Review, which envisages planning the process of reform and providing the necessary financial support up to 2015. Of course, although this document exists in its public and secret formats, there is much that indicates the parameters and scope for its military reform and the inherent contradictions involved in Georgian planning. The overarching guiding principle in this process is the goal of NATO membership; for Georgia it is seen as providing the answer to many of its security problems and has the additional advantage that it will bring a financial dividend. Membership of the Alliance will reduce radically the size of Georgia's defense spending, since it calculates that the Alliance will act as guarantor in any internal conflict situation. "This plan was devised against the background of certain political assumptions: we mean the possibility of transition to a higher step in integration with NATO, which will diminish the prevailing threats. Therefore, additional investment in technical equipment or increase in the size of the armed forces will not be required," explained Kutelia. It must reduce its defense expenditure, given the current level of spending which it is impossible to maintain. Kutelia explained in December 2007 that the defense budget for 2008 was planned as the highest in the cycle to 2015. Moreover, the level of spending will have to increase, if NATO membership is delayed. Kutelia suggested that in 2007 defense spending reached \$940 million, or 22 percent of GDP.¹⁰

Georgia's violent crackdown on political opposition in November 2007 was questioned both within and outside the country, and arguably damaged its credibility internationally.¹¹ Salome Zurbishvili, a leading member of Georgia's National Council of the united opposition movement, said that the chances of Georgia achieving its goal of NATO accession at the Bucharest summit in April 2008 had been "badly damaged by the unrest that broke out in the country on 7 November and the raid on that day of opposition Imedi TV." She blamed President Saakashvili for this, while noting the level of shock felt in European capitals concerning his actions, which had left many wondering who he was in reality, as the incident had exploded the veneer of democracy around his regime. "Our foreign

⁸ See: "NATO to Give Georgia Access to Radar Data—Representative," *RIA Novosti*, Moscow, 23 August, 2007.

⁹ "Georgia Deputy Defense Minister on NATO Prospects, Army Development."

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ "Journalist to Brief News Corps on Georgian Government's Raid of Imedi TV," *Kavkaz-Press*, Tbilisi, 10 November, 2007; "Georgian President Defiant on Calls to Lift State of Emergency," Channel 1, Tbilisi, 10 November, 2007.

partners are shocked at what happened in Georgia. The rose-colored curtain of Georgian democracy has been ripped and they have seen a picture that is incomprehensible to them, a picture of a country that resembles Russia, Putin's Russia, but is not quite Putin's Russia. They do not understand where this country is going or what will happen in the near future," she said. Commenting on reaction within the EU, she explained, "They do not know where Georgia stands or who Saakashvili is at all. It is like when you raise something and it changes before your very eyes and turns into a monster. This is approximately what happened to the West." Significantly, her view of the European perspective was that the EU may have learned not to trust a personality, or one person's team, but to place more confidence in future in institution building; specifically the weak institutions in Georgia such as the judiciary.¹² Saakashvili's re-election on 5 January, 2008, designed to answer critics of Georgia's "democracy," allowed only a short period before the NATO summit in Bucharest, April 2008, to assess whether the events of the raid on IMEDI TV represented a unique isolated incident, or a warning of a deeper malaise within the fledgling "democracy."

Table 1

**Milestones in Georgia's Relations with NATO:
2004-2006**

7 April, 2004	Georgia-NATO high level representative meeting in the 26+1 format in Brussels, where President Saakashvili handed country's IPAP document to the Secretary General of NATO Jaap de Hoop Scheffer
23-24 April, 2004	EAPS—Atlantic Policy Advisor Group session in Tbilisi, chaired by Under Secretary General of NATO, Policy, Ambassador Günter Altenburgh
7 June, 2004	NATO Headquarters, Brussels NATO Senior Political Committee Reinforced (SPCR) in the 26+1 format met Georgian representatives. Meeting was chaired by Under Secretary General of NATO, Security Issues, Ambassador Günter Altenburgh. The purpose of the meeting was to review—Georgia's IPAP
28-29 June, 2004	NATO Summit in Istanbul: Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan officially joined the—Individual Partnership Action Plan—initiative
29 October, 2004	NATO senior layer the North Atlantic Council (NAC) approved Georgia's Individual Partnership Action plan with the so-called Silence Procedure and Georgia transitioned to the second phase of the Euro-Atlantic Integration, the so-called Phase Two
31 December, 2004	Decree # 133 of the Government of Georgia, created the Office of the State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration in order to deepen cooperation

¹² "Opposition Candidate for PM Says Georgia's NATO Chances Badly Damaged by Unrest," Rustavi-2 TV, Tbilisi, 27 November, 2007.

Table 1 (continued)

	with NATO to facilitate full spectrum of military, political, legal integration with the organization, to efficiently coordinate and monitor the integration process among various government agencies
7-11 March, 2005	NATO Interim Individual Partnership Action plan implementation assessment team visited Tbilisi. On 18 May, 2005 an IPAP Implementation result review was held in Brussels
26-29 September, 2005	IPAP interim assessment team visited Tbilisi to unofficially review the IPAP implementation. On 5 October, 2005 consultations were held with members of the NATO International Department
4 February, 2005	An agreement between Georgia and NATO on PfP Liaison Officer Designation entered into force and a South Caucasus Liaison Officer was designated to Georgia
2 March, 2005	An agreement on Support and Assistance in Transit for NATO Forces and NATO Personnel on the Host Nation Between Georgia and NATO was signed
3 April, 2006	North Atlantic Council session in 26+1 format (26 NATO member states and Georgia) was held in Brussels, where they reviewed the report on the implementation assessment of Georgia's IPAP. During the North Atlantic Council session all NATO countries expressed their support for Georgia's aspiration to join NATO. It was clearly stated that significant progress has been achieved in the country from the standpoint of reforms. Namely, IPAP implementation coordination mechanism was assessed positively, that in itself provides for sustainable integration process and reform implementation
21 September, 2006	During the NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting in New York, a decision was made concerning transition to the next step, the Intensified Dialog in Georgia-NATO cooperation
<i>Source:</i> [http://www.eu-nato.gov.ge/english/index.php?title=georgianato].	

Stumbling Blocks in the Path to NATO Accession

- Georgia's decision to increase the size of its armed forces, raising its number of brigades to four and expanding its reserve force, despite western advice to the contrary. According to a

report by the International Security Advisory Board (ISAB) this represented an increase by as much as 30 percent on the figures agreed in the original IPAP.

- Georgia's IPAP pledged to seek a peaceful, not a military, solution to the conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
- It remains unclear whether Georgia's armed forces as a whole are meeting NATO standards (that NATO has clear, objective standards are debatable), or just a small number of its special operations or peace support formations.
- Georgia needs to develop an inventory of manpower and equipment, as well as ensuring that funds are efficiently and transparently used.
- IPAP also requires progress and the achievement of recognized standards in domestic politics and human rights.

These factors complicate Tbilisi's efforts to achieve Euro-Atlantic integration. In fact, these points are brought sharply into focus, given the argument that has influenced decision making in Brussels that suggests Georgia would be much less likely to pursue an aggressive resolution of "frozen conflicts" as a NATO member. One thing that the Alliance wants to avoid, at all cost, would be involvement by proxy, in such "frozen conflicts." In this context, a greater understanding is required of the complex nexus of geopolitical considerations, tensions, local balance and the wider context of NATO's post-Cold War relationship with Russia, as well as bilateral relations between Moscow and Tbilisi. In order to appreciate this, Russian perspectives on the Central Caucasus need to be examined.

The Outlook for the Strategic Balance of Forces in the Central Caucasus: The Russian Perspective

Russian Concerns: Attempts to Hasten the Resolution of Outstanding Conflicts

One of the principal requirements for admission to NATO is that there should be no ongoing armed conflicts in candidate countries or territorial claims to or from neighboring states. As of the start of 2008, neither requirement was met by Georgia, Azerbaijan or Moldova. There are a number of ongoing internal conflicts in the region where Russia almost single-handedly is trying to achieve a peace settlement. At the moment the peace process has stalled with no signs of improvement in the foreseeable future. As for the "smoldering" conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh, it may flare up again, which would destabilize the situation in the entire Caucasus.

A decision on the status of Kosovo may shift the situation either way—for better or for worse. Will the "breakaway" province remain a part of Serbia? If not, what mechanisms should be used for a final settlement and a civilized "divorce"? Since the Ahtisaari plan failed, these issues have been addressed by the Contact Group (Russia-EU-U.S.), which operates on the basis of a U.N. mandate. There is no consensus within the troika. EU-U.S. representatives, citing the "unique" nature of Kosovo's case, are proposing a unilateral path for the province's independence, without taking Serbia's

opinion into account; Russia insists on a consensus based solution, saying that there is a variety of options for Kosovo's final status, and stressing the need for a mutually acceptable compromise between Belgrade and Pristina. Whatever decision the Contact Group may eventually make, it will serve as a kind of model for resolving other conflicts in Eurasia, taking their specifics into account.¹³ Russia has more than just once stated that a decision on Kosovo's status will become "a precedent" for the "unrecognized formations" in the post-Soviet area. In the absence of a universal approach toward solving the "self-determination or territorial integrity" dilemma under the auspices of the U.N., the domino principle may come into play not only in the post-Soviet space, but also across the world, which may lead to new outbreaks of armed violence. This is the position adopted by Moscow, which rejects the policy of double standards.¹⁴

It would seem that this provides a good opportunity for Tbilisi to heal its troubled relationship with Moscow, specifically by adopting a consolidated position at the U.N., not, as proposed by M. Saakashvili (in late 2007), by restarting relations between the two states with "a clean slate." However, that is not happening. Russian experts suggest that Tbilisi is seeking to hasten the resolution of "frozen" conflicts by any means, both on its own and by relying on Western assistance. Suffice it to recall the 2005 events as related by former Defense Minister I. Okruashvili in a live show on Imedi TV in October 2007, when the stage was set for a military operation against South Ossetia, code named Tiger Attack. Or the creation of "a South Ossetian government, as an alternative to Tskhinvali," led by D. Sanakoev, and issuing an ultimatum to "the rebellious territory."¹⁵ Or the Kodori operations (October 2001 and August 2006) in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, aimed at thwarting the Moscow Agreement on the Peacekeeping Operation. That effectively provoked a chain reaction of sovereignty and independence declarations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. And if the aforementioned examples can be attributed to Georgia's independent action, its calculations for annexing the breakaway territories by relying on Western assistance are arousing concern and even anxiety in Moscow.

Art 7 of the Baku Declaration, adopted at the GUAM summit on 19 June, 2007, reiterates "the need to continue joint action to resolve the long-running conflicts in the region based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of internationally recognized state borders ... as well as the importance of *enlisting the support of the international community to resolve these conflicts*" (italics ours.—Auth.).¹⁶

However in reality, GUAM's anti-separatist project remains only on paper: As stated earlier, resolution mechanisms are outside the bounds of their capitals. GUAM members also realize that whatever scheme may be eventually applied, it will be impossible to resolve the conflicts any time soon. Furthermore, considering the ongoing events in the Balkans, in the spite of the efforts by Russia and international organizations, it is likely that the breakaway territories may gain independence. Not surprisingly, of late Georgia has been harshly critical of the Russian peacekeepers. They are being accused of "failing to resolve a single outstanding problem, and impeding a political settlement."¹⁷

¹³ Thus, each conflict in the GUAM area, compared with the Balkan conflicts, has its own specifics, as well as its own development and resolution schemes. For example, the Karabakh conflict is utterly different from the Transnistrian situation, Abkhazia is much closer to a de facto state than is South Ossetia, and so on.

¹⁴ Russian President V. Putin said: "...it is wrong to use one set of rules in Kosovo and another in the Transnistrian region, Abkhazia or South Ossetia. How does the Kosovo situation differ from the situation in the Transnistrian region? It does not differ in any way" (*Politicheskii zhurnal*, No. 53 (130/131), 23 October, 2006, p. 50, available at [www.politjournal.ru]).

¹⁵ The Georgian president said that at the GUAM summit in Baku in June 2007.

¹⁶ The Baku Declaration (GUAM summit, 19 June, 2007).

¹⁷ In the meantime, Russian peacekeepers are carrying out in good faith their mandate for peacekeeping, disengagement of the conflicting sides, and maintenance of stability in the conflict zones. The Russian peacekeepers' performance has often been highly appraised by the U.N. and other international organizations (see: [http://www.peacekeeper.ru/index.php?mid=801]).

Hence the Georgian parliament's resolutions on the termination of peacekeeping operations and calls for reformatting their status. Georgian officials also insist on reviewing the peacekeepers' mandate. They also expect that "guarantees of peace and stability" in Georgia will be provided by other organizations and centers of power—for example, the EU, NATO, and the United States. The Georgian authorities would like to get rid of Russian mediation completely. That is at the first stage. At the second stage, Tbilisi believes that Russian military servicemen in the area will be replaced by other forces. However, the replacement of Russian peacekeepers is not at all a foregone conclusion.

NATO representatives believe that the decision/request to deploy NATO peacekeeping forces in the Caucasus should be accepted by all parties to the conflict, including representatives of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Peter Semneby, the EU Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus, also thinks that the replacement of Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia and Abkhazia should be approached with extreme caution. There are two significant factors here.

The first is a joint statement in support of Russian peacekeepers in the conflict zones that the presidents of the self-proclaimed republics of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and the Transnistrian region adopted at a "summit of unrecognized republics" in Sukhumi on 13 June, 2006. These leaders believe that "the Russian peacekeeping forces should remain in the conflict zones until a final settlement has been achieved." After all, the withdrawal of the Russian peacekeepers will not turn the Abkhazians or Ossetians into Georgia-philis. Still, if the Russian "blue helmets" have to leave, according to S. Bagapsh, their place will be immediately taken by joint Abkhaz-Ossetian-Transnistrian peacekeeping forces. In this connection, neither Moscow nor Tbilisi nor New York should be expected to recognize or endorse such a move.

The second factor is the response to the demarche by the unrecognized republics from the GUAM member countries. In late September 2006, a meeting of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM foreign ministers reached an agreement on the formation of its own peacekeeping contingent. In October, Ukrainian Foreign Minister A. Gritsenko put forward a proposal in accordance with which a GUAM peacekeeping contingent could replace Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and the Transnistrian region in the first half of 2007.¹⁸ At the same time, there are some circumstances that complicate its putting into practice.

- First, before such a contingent may be used in a crisis settlement, it should not only materialize and assume a concrete form, but also be legitimized and recognized on the international level. Meanwhile, even the discussion of the sheer possibility of changing the format or the mandate of peacekeeping operations is a big problem today. It is impossible to use GUAM as an organization operating on the basis of an international mandate (from the U.N. or the OSCE) without its appropriate organizational and legal transformation. That is not to mention the fact that its operational capacity will be significantly inferior to that of other peacekeeping arrangements—i.e., the CIS peacekeeping force, the U.N.'s "blue helmets," NATO or EU forces, etc.
- Second, it is not entirely clear how—given the need to comply with standards of international practice—political decisions on the deployment of GUAM peacekeeping contingents would be made. As is known, a key precondition for the granting of a U.N. or OSCE mandate is the consensus as to the impartiality of a peacekeeping force. In the event of "frozen conflicts" in the FSU area, with some qualifications, Ukraine can be considered to be the only impartial GUAM member country.
- Third, Russian peacekeeping forces are deployed in conflict zones in Georgia, and it would be not only extremely difficult but virtually impossible to conduct any operations without

¹⁸ See: "Smena karaula," *Nezavisimaa gazeta*, 1 November, 2006.

harmonizing such plans with Moscow. Meanwhile, Russia's reaction to these GUAM plans remains skeptical or negative. The Russian defense minister has opined that such "peace-keeping services" by an organization that clearly has its own agenda cannot be regarded with understanding by all parties to the peace process. "Evidently, Russia, which advocates a settlement only by political means, will find appropriate measures to prevent such a scenario from materializing," he said.¹⁹ The Russian Defense Ministry also considers "unlikely" the replacement of Russian peacekeepers deployed in conflict zones by NATO forces. Obviously, Russia, which is a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, will not allow that. The problem is compounded by the fact that Russia's official relations with some GUAM states, primarily Georgia, are probably at an all time low since the disintegration of the U.S.S.R. That effectively rules out any possibility of Moscow even considering any plans for the deployment of GUAM contingents, especially in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has warned Georgia that should the conflict with Russia aggravate, its plans for joining the alliance could be delayed.

At the current stage of the conflict settlement process, both Tbilisi and Baku have "a resentment" of Russia (the same goes for the unrecognized state formations), as they are attempting to sideline Moscow from the peace process and to bring in European and Atlantic forces capable of strengthening the positions of unitary states, which are susceptible to the separatist disease. However, Russia believes that direct military intervention by Western forces (NATO or the EU) in conflict resolution in the Central Caucasus is premature and even dangerous.

- First, for political considerations, neither Washington nor Brussels will evidently want to damage their already cool relations with Moscow any further. Hypothetical military intervention by Western structures in internal conflict resolution will nullify the efforts of the U.N. mission (Abkhazia), the OSCE mission (South Ossetia), the Minsk Group (Nagorno-Karabakh), the CIS (Abkhazia), the Group of Friends of Georgia, and many international nongovernmental organizations whose efforts are currently focused on advancing toward interethnic harmonization and accord between the parties to the conflict.
- Second, compared with the West, Russia has "sensitive" national interests in this subregion, and it is capable of taking decisive action to defend them. However friendly and constructive Russia's relations with both Georgia and Azerbaijan might be in the future, should military operations begin in the Central Caucasus, Moscow, bound by its obligations to Erevan, will render military assistance to its CSTO partner. Furthermore, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the RF Constitution, the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, Moscow is also obligated to ensure the security of its citizens in the subregion in the event of a threat to their life (at present, the majority of Abkhazians and South Ossetians hold Russian passports).
- Third, as international practice shows, Western countries, and especially their international organizations, via which they act, will not exert forceful pressure on a third party unless there are specific political-diplomatic interests at stake or an apparent threat to their national/bloc-related or international security. It is important to note in this context that there are no hostilities in the zone of the Georgian-South Ossetian or Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts at present and they are unlikely in the future. Economically, the production and transportation of Caspian oil is the only thing that makes the Central Caucasus attractive to the Western community, but neither Abkhazia nor South Ossetia stands in the way of any operating or projected oil

¹⁹ Ibidem.

pipelines. As for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, which bypasses Russia, its capacity is nowhere near the flow of energy from Russia to the West. Incidentally, the construction of pipelines from Russia to the West across the Baltic Sea (via Germany) and the Black Sea (Bulgaria and Greece²⁰), circumventing the “problem” transit countries, renders effectively meaningless the sheer idea of creating GUAM as an oil and natural gas supplier to the West, alternative to Russia.

- Fourth, even assuming that hostilities break out in the Central Caucasus again, they will acquire the form of a civil war with mainly insurgent and guerrilla action, where both regular armed formations (peacekeeping forces) and the existing methods of military (peacekeeping) operations are ineffective. Suffice it to look, for example, at the map of Georgia/South Ossetia. About one-third of settlements (around 130) are populated by ethnic Georgians and two-thirds by Ossetians. The majority of Georgian villages are located to the north, southwest and southeast of Tskhinvali.²¹ Ossetian (sometimes mixed) settlements are located next to the Georgian population centers. In the Akhagori area, where most of the villages are Georgian, Ossetian settlements form closed enclaves. Therefore, amid such an ethnic “patchwork,” military operations by the sides involved will greatly differ from the traditional methods of warfare, and it will be extremely difficult to find not only dividing lines, but also targets for effective engagement. Furthermore, both the Georgians and the Ossetians will show belligerence, self-sacrifice, confidence, commitment, austerity, a peculiar understanding of the code of warfare, an excellent knowledge of local terrain, languages, customs, traditions, and so on—in short, everything that peacekeepers from third countries do not have. A similar situation will prevail in case military action starts in Abkhazia or over Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Fifth and finally, as is known, Western mentality is rather sensitive to its own losses (it is enough to remember the U.S.’s hasty withdrawal from Somalia, when 11 U.S. servicemen were killed there at once). The parliaments and governments of Western countries need very strong argumentation (which is lacking and is unlikely to appear in the foreseeable future) to make the decision to send military contingents to zones of frozen conflicts to conduct peace enforcement operations. Therefore, the prospect of Western organizations or alliances forming peacekeeping forces and sending them to the Central Caucasus without parliamentary approval or a U.N. Security Council or OSCE mandate is, rather, wishful thinking on the part of Tbilisi. Especially considering that Western military units are closely involved in the Balkans, in Iraq and Afghanistan, sustaining substantial losses, which arouses well justified criticism within the Western community.

In the long term, it is impossible to predict whether there will be “lasting peace” in the Central Caucasus in the 21st century or whether, as in previous centuries, it is destined to see more military upheavals. However, one thing is evident: already now, it is expedient to restructure the existing peace and stability mechanisms at the regional level. Without certain practical steps both by ODED—GUAM, the CIS, and Russia, on the one hand, and Georgia, on the other, all attempts to ensure territorial integrity and security at the regional level will go nowhere. It is also clear that the path of political compromise is indispensable if tangible results are to be achieved, so Tbilisi, Tskhinvali and Sukhumi should abandon their ambitions and meet each other half way. Furthermore, psychological barriers can be removed and a path to reconciliation cleared only by forgoing the use of force as a

²⁰ The relevant pipeline construction agreements were signed in 2007.

²¹ Georgia’s most problem-ridden enclave, comprising nine large ethnic Georgian villages to the north of Tskhinvali.

means of dealing with any disputes. It is necessary to resolve the problems of refugees and economic rehabilitation in the former conflict zone. It is essential to clarify confidence building measures and guarantees for the non-resumption of hostilities. At the same time, all bilateral and multilateral agreements and accords should be observed. All of this requires the political will of the parties to the conflicts; a concurrence of interests of states, organizations and alliances in a common geopolitical space; the elimination of threats to these interests through joint efforts; harmony between peacekeeping practice and the situation on the ground in conflict areas, and finally, a universal approach toward resolving, under U.N. auspices, of the “self-determination or territorial integrity” dilemma. However, each step toward consolidating the efforts by the conflicting sides, Russia, and regional organizations (alliances) in dealing with long-running conflicts will become a significant contribution to global and regional security, as well as to countering common challenges and threats through joint efforts.

***The Balance of Forces
in the Central Caucasus.
NATO's Further Eastward Expansion***

It should be borne in mind that compared with Western Europe, where there is a coherent regional (EU-NATO) security system in place, appropriate security structures in the post-Soviet areas as a whole and in its Central Caucasian subregion have yet to evolve. Two main stages in the development of these processes can be singled out: First, from 1991 until the late 1990s, which was marked by the evolution of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), following the breakup of the U.S.S.R. Second, since 1999 to date, characterized by the development of subregional security institutions and a gradual scaling down of activities by the CIS as a mechanism of ensuring security in the FSU area. Furthermore, analysis of the ongoing processes within the CIS shows that the goal of creating a unified economic and military-political space has not been achieved. The chances of the CIS' evolution along these lines are slim in the foreseeable future.²² Evidently, the eventual disintegration of the CIS is historically inevitable. The place of the gradually disappearing organization is already being taken by new subregional security institutions: EurAsEC, ODED—GUAM, the CSTO, and the SCO.

Within the bounds of these associations, states oftentimes pursue antagonistic interests. Some countries link the vector of their development with Russia. Other states are seeking to join European structures (the EU and NATO). This is an objective process, given that interstate disagreements in the post-Soviet area are still quite pronounced. This is why the level of trust that is necessary for the unification of the CIS countries with the objective of creating some supra-state body ensuring the security of all CIS states²³ has never been achieved. The experience of the 1990s, in spite of some successes within the CIS, also points to failures and miscalculations by the member states' political leadership in its foreign policy with respect to other countries, the manifestation of “isolationism” and “neo-imperial” aspirations, the lack of clear-cut objectives and priorities, and the replacement of a coherent, focused policy with contrived administrative schemes, formal rituals and hundreds of unfeasible decisions and agreements within the framework of the CIS.²⁴ There have also been a number of sub-

²² See: “Novye vyzovy bezopasnosti i Rossia,” *Sovet po vneshney i oboronnoy politike*, 2002, p. 6.

²³ Initially, the CIS planned to create joint armed forces and command and control agencies to ensure the CIS countries' security and their protection against external aggression.

²⁴ See: *Strategiia Rossii: povestka dnia dlia Prezidenta*, Moscow, 2000, p. 74.

jective and objective, internal and external factors in military-political cooperation between the CIS member states, affecting its scale, character, and essence.

- First, there has been a real threat of some CIS states moving away from the declared principles of integration. The cooperation potential, which was accumulated at the end of the 20th century, is visibly declining. The involvement of the CIS states in globalization processes and the growing diversity of their foreign economic and foreign political ties are objectively affecting the entire system of interstate relations that have emerged in the CIS area.²⁵
- Second, there are increasing indications of international competition for access to the CIS countries' energy resources, especially in the Caspian Region and Central Asia. The desire by a number of leading states in the West, as well as China, Japan, and the Islamic world, to ensure their participation in major projects for the production and transportation of raw materials has up to a certain degree impacted on the military-political sphere of their interaction.
- Third, in the early 21st century, an essentially new situation has emerged in the collective security sphere. It manifested itself primarily in the position that a number of CIS states took on the prolongation of the Collective Security Treaty (15 May, 1992).²⁶ The late 1990s can be regarded as a starting point in the CIS's de facto split over Russia and foreign policy reorientation in a number of countries following the review of the "Russian factor," its assessment and general perception. By that time, having concentrated its efforts on minimizing the negative fallout from the breakup of the U.S.S.R., the CIS proved unable to act as an effective integration vehicle, among others, in the security sphere. It is noteworthy that during the entire period of "civilized divorce" with the FSU republics, Russia's policy with respect to its CIS partners was, rather, two faced. The Kremlin, absorbed in the problem of consolidating power at home, lacked sufficient clout to rally the "near abroad". Any attempts to transform the CIS into a military-political association, especially with Russia's dominant role, provoked resistance by political elites in a number of CIS states. Cooperation in the security sphere was effectively taken out of the CIS format.²⁷

Eventually, groups of states evolved in the post-Soviet area, which could conveniently be described as follows. There are three main models of regional security institutions. On the one hand, there are institutions oriented toward European and trans-Atlantic security structures, primarily ODED—GUAM; on the other, the CSTO and the SCO, offering independent approaches and mechanisms for dealing with security challenges, although not completely closing the door to cooperation with Western institutions.²⁸ The third group includes states adhering to a policy of neutrality on military security (for example, Turkmenistan).

The creation of GUAM, with active support from Washington, was the reaction by its member states to the ineffectiveness of the CIS, which lacked substantial international influence and was increasingly turning from a political cooperation project into a battleground of conflicting interests. Initially, GUAM was not conceived as a security institution. First, it was oriented toward euro-Atlan-

²⁵ That was discussed by the CIS presidents at a CIS heads of state meeting in Astana, on 16 September, 2004.

²⁶ The protocol extending the Treaty was signed in 1999 by Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. These states also became members of the CSTO, signing the CSTO Charter and the Agreement on the Legal Status of the CSTO on 7 October, 2002 in Chisinau. Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan suspended their participation in the Treaty in 1999.

²⁷ The only exception is the CIS joint air defense system, but under that system, Russia is effectively building a complex of regional air defense systems on the basis of bilateral agreements with its partners.

²⁸ The CSTO has also said that it is prepared to cooperate and even build joint institutions with the EU and NATO, whereas the SCO is more oriented toward regional projects and cooperation in Asia rather than in the West.

tic integration, including in the military-political sphere, not toward the search for an independent regional security cooperation project. Second, there were simply no resources available for that—economic, political or military. Third and finally, any military-political “claim” on the part of GUAM would have transformed its member countries from Russia’s political and economic (in the energy sphere) competitors into its direct opponents in the security sphere.

Considering that GUAM was conceived as a structure designed to “strengthen regional security in all areas of activity,”²⁹ its transformation into a viable regional security organization seems to be rather problematic. Apart from the aforementioned reasons, this is connected with the difficulties of defining the “regional security” sphere. For example, the Central Caucasus, which has its own specifics, can hardly be put in the same league with Ukraine and Moldova, while Uzbekistan, which was a member of the organization from 1999 through 2005, eroded that hypothetical regional community. At the same time, the latest events give cause to believe that GUAM continues to consider possibilities for developing military-political cooperation to enable the organization eventually to become a viable security institution. It is pondering the idea of creating a GUAM peacekeeping force and civilian police units.³⁰ However, these are only the components of a military structure, and it needs time to form a viable military organization. The armed forces of the GUAM member countries are in different stages of military reform. If Ukraine and partly Georgia have seen some progress and accumulated some experience of participation in international peacekeeping operations in recent years, the direction and standards of military organization and development in Azerbaijan and a formally neutral Moldova differ substantially from the modernization of the military establishment in their partner countries.

Today, the CSTO is the only organization in the post-Soviet area that was created precisely as a security institution with priority being given to military cooperation between the member countries. In effect, the CSTO has evolved as a military-political dimension of the CIS, which it proved impossible to forge within the CIS format.³¹ The CSTO provided a framework for regional collective security subsystems in the Caucasus, the west, and Central Asia. Its core elements were the Russian-Armenian coalition force (created in 1996), the Russian-Belarusian coalition force (1999) and the rapid deployment force of the Central Asian region (2001). This means that the CSTO is well positioned to respond to military threats coming from different directions. Western military engagement with the Central Asian members of the CSTO often concentrates on the forces which are earmarked for use within the CSTO; in Kazakhstan, for example, the Airmobile forces are the backbone of Kazakhstan’s peacekeeping battalion (KAZBAT) as well as representing those formations most suited to the rapid reaction potential of the CSTO.

It should also be noted that in assessing the strategic balance of forces, for example, in the Central Caucasus, the procedure where the national capabilities of each particular country are assessed separately is becoming a thing of the past. Today, the correlation of forces is assessed by the strategic (operational-strategic) sectors of coalition forces (troops) of states bound by allied obligations within the framework of existing military-political treaties. Thus, in the present circumstances, taking into account the numerical strength, assets and equipment of the Armenian Armed Forces, Russia’s North Caucasus Military District, the Russian Black Sea Fleet and the Russian Caspian Flotilla, as well as RF military bases in the Trans Caucasus, supremacy in the strategic correlation of

²⁹ See: The GUUAM Yalta Charter, 7 June, 2001, available at [<http://www.guam.org.ua/180.536.0.0.1.0.phtml>].

³⁰ The decision was made at a meeting of the organization’s foreign ministers on 25 September, 2006 in New York.

³¹ Adopted in 1995, the Collective Security Concept is based on the member countries’ striving for cooperation in the military and military-political sphere. The organization’s area of responsibility includes the territory of its member states, while the Collective Security Treaty declares their right to collective defense in conformity with Art 51 of the U.N. Charter, establishing the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the Organization/Treaty.

forces in many operational-strategic sectors of the Central Caucasus, as well as in airspace and outer space, on land and at sea belongs the CSTO member countries.

However, the situation could change sharply if Georgia and then Azerbaijan are admitted to NATO. In that event the strategic pendulum in the balance of forces will swing: NATO will have an overwhelming superiority in the region. The Caucasus will become an area witnessing an intensifying clash of interests of world and regional powers with a growing shortage of security, since in response to yet another round of NATO eastward expansion,³² Russia will take appropriate measures to protect its national interest as well as the interests of its CSTO allies. In the end, everyone will suffer—Russia, Central Caucasian states, and NATO.

Russia will have to increase the burden of military spending, strengthen its forces (troops) in the Caucasus strategic sector, and review its underlying obligations both in the bilateral and international (multilateral) format. The blame for that in part rests with the country's former military-political leadership. Only the political shortsightedness and incompetence of the country's leadership during the Gorbachev and Yeltsin era is responsible for the absence of written guarantees to Russia from the North Atlantic alliance about the non-expansion of NATO's military structure toward the RF state borders. The solemn pledges that the leadership of the alliance provided upon the reunification of Germany³³ in reality turned out to be pure diplomatic demagoguery. We are seeing the admission of the first wave of East European states to NATO and subsequently also the Baltic States, as well as considering the plans to deploy missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic and the possible admission to NATO of a number of FSU states. This point was made by Vladimir Putin, with deep sadness, in his 2007 Munich speech.

For example, to Georgia, NATO membership will mean a scaling down of relations with Russia in many areas, the provision of Russian goods and services at world prices, a toughening of Russia's immigration policy, a scaling down of investment projects, and so on and so forth. Nevertheless, in spite of the country's economic plight now, Georgia's military budget and military might are being built up on an unprecedented scale.³⁴ According to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Georgia's military spending in 2005 was 143 percent higher than in 2004—the highest growth rate in the world. Twenty-two percent of GDP for military needs is an onerous burden even for developed nations (to compare, Russia's military budget is a little over 2.5 percent of GDP). Furthermore, Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS says a part of funds to enhance Georgia's defense capability have come from the United States, among others. One-fifth (21 percent) of the entire U.S. military aid to FSU republics goes to Georgia. The second largest financial sponsor is Turkey. Other NATO member countries and NATO partners are also making a substantial contribution. In many instances, this contribution is "gratuitous" for Georgia.³⁵ Of late, Georgia has been building up its military capability by buying or receiving weapons and armor from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, the United States, Turkey, Macedonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Israel, and some other states (see Table 2).

³² In accordance with the current National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, possible threats to Russia's national interests include NATO's strengthening and eastward expansion, and the deployment of foreign military bases and forces in close proximity to the Russian borders.

³³ Speaking in Brussels on 17 May, 1990, NATO Secretary General Verner said: The sheer fact that we are prepared not to deploy NATO troops outside the FRG borders gives the Soviet Union firm security guarantees.

³⁴ In accordance with the Law on the Georgian Armed Forces, the country had 31,878 servicemen in 2006. Of them the Georgian Defense Ministry had 26,000.

³⁵ For example, Georgia's Navy almost entirely consists of donated vessels: the *Grif* class patrol craft and the *Konotop* missile carrying ship from Ukraine, a patrol boat from Bulgaria, and two patrol boats and a missile carrying ship from Greece. The United States granted over \$20 million for the Navy's modernization as well as five patrol boats. Lithuania is to hand Georgia two frigates—the *Zhemaitis* and the *Aukstaitis*.

Obviously, Georgia's military preparations are aimed neither against Russia or Armenia, its next door neighbors, but are designed to exert forceful pressure on the unrecognized republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and, if necessary, to reopen "frozen" conflicts.

Table 2

**Deliveries of Arms and Military Equipment to Georgia
in 2005-2006**

Types of Arms and Military Equipment	2005	2006 (first eight months)	Supplier Countries
T-72 tanks	31	40	U.S. Turkey Bulgaria Czech Republic Ukraine Macedonia Rumania Serbia Bosnia Egypt Israel Hungary
BMP-2 (infantry fighting vehicles)	40	10	
BTR 70, BTR 80 (APCs)	15	10	
Artillery systems	34	35	
Su-25 fighter planes	2	4	
Mi-24 helicopters	2	4	
Mi-8 helicopters	4	12	
Antitank guided missiles	230	450	
Small arms and light weapons (SALW)	15,000	104,000	
SALW ammunition	Over 2.2 million rounds	1.5 million rounds	

Russia has repeatedly expressed its concern over the growing arms supplies to Georgia. Russia's concern is shared by the international public. Thus, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the European commissioner for external relations and European neighborhood policy, subjected Georgia to harsh criticism over its growing defense spending and called for a cut.³⁶

As for the NATO member countries, the admission of Georgia and Azerbaijan to the alliance will obviously weaken the positive potential that has been accumulated within the framework of the Russia-NATO Council. All of that will be compounded by the "freezing" of dialog between Moscow and Brussels/Washington on global problems, primarily military-political. Meanwhile, the preservation of such a mechanism is an objective necessity, if Russia-West relations are to be maintained at least on the level of a "cool" partnership. Instead of Russia, a new wave of unqualified migrant guest workers (Gastarbeiter) from Georgia and Azerbaijan should be expected to flow into Western countries.

The new military-strategic circumstances will also confront Russia with the need to pay close attention to ensuring national security in the Central Caucasus, primarily in the military realm, as well as to preserve its allies and acquire new ones. This objectively requires a review and adjustment of the

³⁶ At international security conference in Ljubljana on 29 August, 2006.

policy pursued by the Russian state leadership with respect to NATO. Obviously, the vector of military-political and economic development will be reoriented mainly to the east. While analyzing the evolution of relations between GUAM/NATO and Russia/CSTO, one cannot rule out a scenario where a number of antagonistic states could emerge in the Central Caucasus within the framework of regional associations, which would hardly be conducive to regional stability and security.

In Place of Conclusion: Opposition or Cooperation

The differing interests, the foreign policy and regional guidelines of the GUAM and CSTO member countries, and the drastic differences in their socioeconomic systems and political regimes, as well as their military capabilities, are significant factors in the relative instability of the emerging security structures, which erodes their role and weakens their viability. Neither GUAM, in which Russia is not involved, nor the CSTO is so far able to become credible collective security systems in the Central Caucasus within a coordinated strategy and politico-diplomatic dialog and cooperation. The absence of coordinated positions among the member countries of these two organizations and a shortage of resources result in the duplication of their structures, initiatives and projects within each organization.

In present day conditions, there is virtually no dialog between the CSTO and GUAM although objectively, there is a field for cooperation between the two organizations. For example, cooperation in the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and trafficking in human beings is feasible and necessary. By now, the CSTO has accumulated extensive practical experience in this sphere, which the organization could well share with its neighbors. At the same time, more effective action by GUAM in this area could be conducive to the general stabilization of the situation in the Central Caucasus and the resolution of outstanding problems there.

That said, the relative weakness of these institutions, their different foreign policy priorities, the acute political competition between them, and the absence of a coordinated security strategy, including on the institutional level, enable Western countries and organizations (NATO, the EU) to intensify their activities in the post-Soviet area, especially in the Central Caucasus. However, that does not mean that the struggle for leadership between Russia and the alliance will necessarily acquire extreme forms, let alone turn into a confrontation.

If the member states pursued a more flexible policy, Russia could, on the one hand, assume the role of coordinator for CSTO-SCO initiatives and on the other, intensify and diversify dialog with Western security institutions, with the two organizations *sharing responsibility, not only competing for influence*. This will require priority in cooperation to be given to countering common external security threats and ensuring active policy coordination both within each organization and on the inter-institutional level. To Moscow, such cooperation is essential, and it is increasingly prioritizing this line toward the “division of labor” within the framework of Russian-Western partnership. Thus, addressing a CIS and Baltic media forum in Moscow in December 2006, then Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov said: “The next logical step toward strengthening international security could be the formulation of a mechanism for interaction between NATO and the CSTO with the subsequent clear-cut division of areas of responsibility.”³⁷ As a follow-up to that, Nikolai Bordiuzha, secretary general of the CSTO, sent a proposal to the NATO secretary general on setting up contacts both on general matters of threat assessment and on specific cooperation in countering the drug threat from Afghani-

³⁷ See: “Novyy razdel Yevrazii,” *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 4 December, 2006.

stan.³⁸ The CSTO follows a similar line with respect to the EU. According to the CSTO Secretariat, “the development of relations between CSTO member states and the EU on the bilateral level has approached a stage where the question about relations between the CSTO and the EU on the multilateral level should be put on the agenda.”³⁹

With greater political coordination between the countries, as well as in the various spheres of the organizations’ activity and with political will for dialog, the search for compromise and harmonization of positions both on the part of the GUAM states and their Western partners, on the one hand, and Russia and the CSTO on the other, their cooperation can make a positive contribution to conflict resolution in the post-Soviet area. Thus, the peace process could be expedited by adjusting the mechanism of peacekeeping operations. In one conflict resolution scenario, the ongoing Russian/CIS operations could be transformed into integrated, multidimensional operations under the auspices of the U.N./OSCE with a broad participation of military, police and civilian personnel from other states. Evidently, the transformation of the existing peacekeeping mandates to multinational peacekeeping missions under a U.N./OSCE mandate could provide a vital impetus to the settlement of the majority of crises by political means. Priority in future operations should be given to ensuring guarantees for the implementation of military-political and economic agreements achieved by the parties concerned and ensuring the successful realization of peacekeeping and policing functions in security zones.

Such operations make it possible, without changing Russia’s military component and with the existing U.N. and OSCE missions to Georgia, to tap NATO’s experience in rebuilding the subregion’s military infrastructure, destroyed by the war, along the lines of civil-military cooperation, or CIMIC (similar to the use of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or PRTs, in the course of the ISAF operation in Afghanistan), as well as restoring democratic power bodies and the rights and freedoms of the indigenous population (the experience of OSCE peacekeepers). Such approaches are in conformity with the rules of employing U.N. peacekeeping contingents in the final stages of peace building in conflict zones. Especially considering that the Georgian authorities, as well as other parties involved in resolving “frozen” conflicts, agree that the OSCE and NATO should become more closely involved in conflict resolution. If *all parties* concerned reach a consensus, other peacekeeping forces, in addition to the Russian peacekeepers, could eventually appear in the post-Soviet area. The shifting of emphasis from peacekeeping to peace building will make it possible to use the accumulated cooperation potential for implementing more effective measures to ensure the organized return of refugees and internally displaced people, and the economic rehabilitation of war-ravaged areas. Furthermore, the NATO and Russian heads of state and government have agreed on cooperation in crisis management.⁴⁰ The decision was also made to formulate and develop a basic concept for joint Russian-NATO peacekeeping operations.⁴¹ The first such document was drafted by a working group of the Russia-NATO Council in 2002,⁴² which could be used as a basis for developing similar documents on Russia’s cooperation with other regional organizations.

³⁸ See: Interview of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister G. Karasin with the Interfax news agency on 8 November, 2005, available at [<http://www.mid.ru/ns-rsng.nsf/3a813e35eb116963432569ee0048fdbe/432569d800221466c32570b3002f4f3f?OpenDocument>].

³⁹ Highlights of a report by the CSTO Secretariat at an international conference, A Strategy for Russia/CSTO Dialog with the European Union on Security Matters, Moscow, 18-19 March, 2005.

⁴⁰ The agreement was achieved at a meeting in Rome on 28 May, 2002.

⁴¹ The decision was based on the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (1997), stating that “once consensus has been reached in the course of consultation, the Permanent Joint Council will engage in making joint decisions and taking joint action on a case by case basis, including participation, on an equitable basis, in the planning and preparation of joint operations, including peacekeeping operations under the authority of the U.N. Security Council or the responsibility of the OSCE.”

⁴² See: *Political Aspects of a Generic Concept of Joint NATO-Russia Peacekeeping Operations*, Annex 1.

Unfortunately, it has to be admitted that at the present time, neither the GUAM countries nor Moscow are showing any interest or readiness for constructive dialog. NATO and the EU also avoid a multi-format dialog, traditionally focusing their efforts on bilateral relations with the GUAM and CSTO member states. For its part, the United States continues to play an independent role and is not interested—either for political or pragmatic considerations—in establishing GUAM-Russia/CSTO dialog in the search for solutions to “frozen conflicts.” Meanwhile, external security threats, which have a transborder character and objectively pose a threat to all countries in the Caucasus, at the current stage in the evolution of post-Soviet institutions, are treated as “secondary” with respect to the so-called Russian factor. That comes through in specific political steps taken by the leadership of the organizations’ member countries, determining the directions for the development of these organizations, as well as the practical projects that they undertake.

Nevertheless, the present authors count on the political wisdom of state leaders in the Caucasus and the West, as well as the leadership of the existing regional organizations and alliances. By acting in the interest of their citizens and the international community as a whole, they should not permit the appearance of new dividing lines in the Central Caucasus or a new Cold War in the post-Soviet space. This requires political will on both sides and the ability to meet each other halfway. There is cautious optimism in that respect: The West European security system took almost half a century to evolve, while subregional security structures in the post-Soviet area have yet to mark their 10th anniversary. Obviously, they need time to realize that joint efforts are the only path to meeting the existing challenges and threats to regional stability and security.