



**8th Workshop of the PfP Consortium Study Group  
“Regional Stability in the South Caucasus”**

**“What Kind of Sovereignty?  
Examining Alternative Governance Models  
in the South Caucasus”  
- Programme and Workshop Outline -**

**-Draft-**

**7-9 November 2013  
Reichenau, Austria**

**Purpose:**

In 2012, the Austrian Ministry of Defence and Sports, through its National Defence Academy and the Directorate General for Security Policy, initiated a resume of the scientific work done by the PfP Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes in the region of the SouthCaucasus. This initiative built upon a Study Group which begun already in 2001 but was discontinued to internal strife in the region in 2005.

Two workshops in Reichenau, Austria from 9 to 11 November 2012 and most recently in Tbilisi from 13 to 15 March 2013 achieved success in that they demonstrated that the Study Group had established a broad academic basis to achieve cohesion rapidly. The 8th workshop of the Study Group will be the opportunity for experts to present and develop ideas on alternative models of governance, and present them to regional stakeholders for their consideration.

It is hoped that the regional actors will also be inspired by new conceptions of sovereignty and of governance, and will help them address the critical needs to move on with their relations in the region. More importantly, new sovereignty models could be a way to de-link issues that prevent movement forward on a number of critical issues, some of which have been raised as sine qua non conditions for the re-opening of peace talks or negotiations over status.

This workshop will be the occasion for regional experts from the South Caucasus countries as well as from regions, especially Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh, to update the group as to their grievances and present their own vision of the way forward, discussing the potential of finding alternative ways

of cooperating beyond the current stalemate. The professional level of the participants should enable the policy recommendations to be heard not only in Euro-Atlantic capitals and in EU/NATO headquarters, but in the centres of decision of the South Caucasus itself, as well.

This is why it is propitious to convene the upcoming 8<sup>th</sup> workshop of the Study Group entitled **“What kind of Sovereignty? Alternative Models of Governance in the South Caucasus”** in Reichenau, Austria, 7-9 November 2013.

## Partners

The partners to this project are:

- Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna/Austria
- Directorate General for Security Policy, Austrian Ministry of Defence and Sports, Vienna/Austria
- PFP Consortium Study Group “Regional Stability in the South Caucasus”, [www.pfpconsortium.org](http://www.pfpconsortium.org)

## Topic Outline

In the post-Cold War, multipolar, interdependent and postmodern world, the notion of “independence” has become muddled. As an academic and political concept, it represents that ability of a population to determine for itself, how it will regulate every facet of life and relations on a given and recognized territory. The concept calls for the exercise of this power – sovereignty – free from interference by other agents.

Geopolitical actors, however, do not exist in isolation. The fabric of international relationships, woven into legal regimes, asymmetries of power, differences in wealth and being enacted by populations whose identities – always a matter of debate – do not fit exactly the acknowledged political boundaries, is interdependent. After the Cold War, at about the same time that the South Caucasus erupted into territorial and ethnic conflict, the international community had to be reacquainted with this concept. Interdependent political, trade and security relationships are the norm in international relations. The ideological colouring of the Cold War impeded global interdependence for the better part of 70 years. This being the average lifespan of a human being, it is normal that the human experience understood interdependence as a novelty. For the purpose of this workshop, and also to govern our deliberations, it is a *fact*. Interdependence, interpenetration, and the influence of third parties on domestic and international relations are *normal*. This challenges the notion of independence for a number of actors in the South Caucasus. The perpetuation – and aggravation – of tensions in the region are both a function of a strategic stalemate, as well as the result of trying to “unfreeze” the conflicts unilaterally, without full consideration to all the interests in the region and the inter-linkages of issues. Thus, attempts at resolution, either through the good offices of the Minsk Group or as part of the Geneva International Discussions processes, have been so far failed to break the stalemate. Commitments to the non-use of force between Abkhazia and Georgia are contingent upon Russia as well. The return of IDPs, whether in Abkhazia or Nagorno-Karabakh, is linked with the issue of political statuses. The question of the presence of Russian forces in the Gali region of Abkhazia is linked to the potential Islamist threat in the North Caucasus. Meanwhile, Abkhazia will not renege on its agenda of recognition, and, for their part, neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan are willing to move on Nagorno-Karabakh.

This workshop will entertain ideas on alternative models of sovereignty, bearing in mind that independence, in reality, can never be absolute. Three alternative models will be discussed in depth:

- joint sovereignty, an idea floated during the 6<sup>th</sup> RSSC SG workshop in 2012,
- federative solutions, which have been put forward in Georgian-Abkhaz negotiations several years ago,
- joint management, which is a more common model.

The aim of the workshop is to propose policy recommendations that would be acceptable to all the parties in the region, in their respective conflict, and recommendations that would also make the idea of a unified region possible – making the South Caucasus a self-contained strategic region.

### **Key questions**

- How can the concept of “sovereignty” be redefined in a manner acceptable to South Caucasus political actors and their constituencies?
- How ready are the stakeholders (public and elite) to embrace this redefinition, and solve their differences based on new notions of sovereignty, and/or shared governance?
- What objective conditions would permit joint/shared sovereignty? In other words, how would it work?
- Joint/shared sovereignty over what? Tax revenue? Responsibilities? Territories?
- What are the obstacles to redefinition?
- What are the benefits and inconveniences?

### **PANEL 1: Sovereignty by Other Means**

This panel considers alternative concepts of sovereignty, bearing in mind that independence cannot be absolute. In the presentation on “joint sovereignty”, the basic question to be answered is how two competing political actors can share stewardship over a contested territory. In this context, the particular questions could also be “what *kind* of sovereignty?” or rather “sovereignty over *what*?” (population, territory, resources?) Another concept to consider is that of federative and confederative relations. In this model, political self-determination in regions or by groups (ethnic, tribal, religious or linguistic) accords itself with territorial integrity, and does not affect the political fortunes of the actors in the region, or in the centre. Rather, the model seeks to divide stewardship of issues along administrative lines, rather than on political affinity. In considering “joint management of issues”, examples of joint administration and operation of contested territories, or resources will be discussed. These models should provide the study group with enough ideas to engage on ways to disentangle the issues as they have emerged over the last few years of negotiation.

### **PANEL 2: Sovereignty as perceived in the Western part of the South Caucasus**

This panel will consider the issues of sovereignty in the Western part of the South Caucasus, and will also examine whether territorial integrity, from the Georgian perspective, cannot be reconciled with the other views of sovereignty. In determining how much “independence” is relative, the panelists should emphasise the conditions necessary for conflict resolution in the region. As such, they are welcome to discuss the issue of IDPs, presence of foreign troops, and the validity of existing incident response mechanisms in ensuring regional stability. Russian ideas for a possible solution are highly important in this panel. Panelists will be asked to base their presentations on empirical analysis and factual statistics.

### **PANEL 3: Sovereignty as perceived in the Eastern part of the South Caucasus**

Much like panel 2, this panel offers the opportunity for actors from the Eastern part of the South Caucasus to share their point of view about the future status of their region, in conjunction with representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan. As the situation between Armenia and Azerbaijan is excessively fragile, participants should focus on ways to defuse tensions between the two countries at the executive level, in order to re-open discussions in a more promising manner. This panel would benefit from ideas on the sharing of resources, territory, populations (including the return of IDPs) in a format that has not been considered before.

### **PANEL 4: Alternative models of sovereignty in practice**

Panelists from the region propose ideas for “political and administrative jointness” involving the models proposed previously. Presentations should focus on the local conditions required for success, and on the kind and level of support required by external actors (EU/NATO, OSCE).