



**12th Workshop of the PfP Consortium Study Group
“Regional Stability in the South Caucasus”**

**“The Media Is the Message:
Shaping Compromise in the South Caucasus”**

– Programme and Workshop Outline –

12-15 November 2015

Reichenau/Rax, 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 South Caucasus. This initiative built upon a Study Group which began already in 2001 but was discontinued due to internal strife in the region in 2005.

Six workshops – three in Reichenau, Austria from 9 to 11 November 2012, from 7 to 9 November 2013, and from 6 to 8 November 2014, and one each in Tbilisi, Georgia from 13 to 15 March 2013, Istanbul, Turkey from 20-22 March 2014 , and Kiev, Ukraine from 26 to 28 March 2015 – achieved success in that they demonstrated that the Study Group had established a broad academic basis to achieve cohesion rapidly. The 11th workshop of the Study Group provided the opportunity for experts to present and develop ideas concerning the concept of “Strategic Patience”, which implies determining what geopolitical changes become accepted or not, and why they are acceptable or not. The workshop was also the occasion to test out a new format for deliberations, in the form of negotiation simulations over the conflicts of the South Caucasus. One of the recurring observations to come out of these deliberations and the interactive discussion is that the concept of “strategic patience” depends more on the shaping of opinion than on the acceptability of settlement or status proposals. Hence, each party willing to resolve the protracted conflicts in the South Caucasus should demonstrate its political will to take risks while accepting a compromise solution. That would involve ceasing to demonize and threaten the other party, and adopting a changed narrative on conflict resolution reflecting a constructive, dialogue-oriented approach. Therefore, setting up a platform for dialogue between respective civil societies and interested business/expert interest groups, and more responsible attitudes of the media against conflict resolution and post-conflict peace building may have an important role to play in building up the constituencies of peace. That would include preparing the political and psychological conditions for readying wider circles of South Caucasian societies to accept negotiated compromise solutions to the protracted conflicts.

This is why it is propitious to convene the upcoming 12th workshop of the Study Group entitled **“The Media Is the Message: Shaping Compromises in the South Caucasus”** in **Reichenau, Austria, on 12-15 November 2015.**

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
- The European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels.

Topic Outline

The old adage says that the first casualty of war is the Truth. Nowhere has this been demonstrated more dramatically than during the current war between Russia and Ukraine. This conflict hits close to the European area of interest, and reminds us of how crises escalate and get transformed through the eye of the camera, and through the journalists’ printed words. The same process of information transformation has occurred during the conflicts of the South Caucasus,

but interest was too diluted for the international community to notice, let alone distinguish fact from fiction. Neglect of the South Caucasus as a region, lack of understanding of the deep-rooted issues have created an informational landscape that lends itself to simplification, manipulation, and vulgarization now that all eyes are turning East in search of lasting solutions to intractable problems.

The South Caucasus is composed of countries and political entities that are nominally democratic (although opposition figures in Azerbaijan lament grave shortcomings in respect of human and political rights there). One of the cardinal features of a free society is freedom of expression, freedom of the press and of opinion. However in case of conflict, the media tends to subordinate itself to the needs of the State. It may become an instrument to push particular agendas and views. As a result, communities and countries are torn further apart. The 11th RSSC SG, held in Kiev March 26-29, concluded that one way to generate acceptance of “new realities” or “alternatives” to the current stalemates in Abkhazia/South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh is to prepare the respective constituencies in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan for peace. The aim of informational preparation would be to create political cover for the respective elite in making difficult decisions that only a few months prior might be unpopular. The aim here is to see whether the media and other non-governmental actors can have a constructive role in enabling the conflicting sides to break out of the cycle of tension and conflict.

The 12th RSSC SG will explore how the media can help shape the conditions that allow stability to prevail, and even compromise to be considered by the political elite. Panelists will be invited to expose on the following questions: what is the structure of the media market in the South Caucasus and how can State-run or State-sympathetic media adjust their content to de-polarize issues? Hypothetically, the answer may be found in a broad-based dialogue on a common post-conflict vision for regional integration and economic development in the South Caucasus aiming to ease tension and help all parties to look into the future. This may involve the media working closely with civil societies and interested business and experts groups from the regional states, and from potential Western sponsors. That is, a de-politicization of media reporting must aim at building a constituency of peace through promoting cross-border cooperation and success stories in fields like economics, tourism and/or culture. This would open the way to the “re-humanization” of “the other”.

Key questions

- What is the structure of the media market in the South Caucasus; is there a greater use of printed, as opposed to televised or radio media?
- What is the role of internet and social media?
- How can non-political reporting highlight efforts at regional integration?
- What would be the practical steps to get editors to accept a change in content?
- Can large-scale communications companies help countries shape a discourse of renewal and reconciliation?
- What would be the content of a constructive media campaign, and what would be the preferred vehicle of transmission?

- How could the civil society, interested business and experts groups, and the media work together to set up a constructive dialogue, at national and international levels, highlighting the commercial and economic values of peace?
- How to transform the bilateral and multilateral socio-economic dialogue in the South Caucasus from an instrument of the ongoing information war into an incentive for future peace?

PANEL 1: The Media market in the South Caucasus and in Russia: Interests and Stakeholders

Traditionally, the media is a tool destined to serve the public interest. Originally created from the government's official gazette, it has been privatized and developed its own interests, catering to the wishes and needs of a democratic society. This panel will seek to illustrate what is the structure of the media market in the South Caucasus, who its primary stakeholders are, and what needs the media serves in these societies. This panel should aim to determine whether there is a single "aim" stretching from the political elite down to the constituencies, which is carried by the media. How is the news "made" in the South Caucasus and Russia, and "why" is it made like that? These are questions that this panel should address.

PANEL 2: Media's Interaction with Civil Society: Producing the News and Shaping the Media Messages

Civil society organizations are pivotal in providing the necessary support for peace, ensuring that any agreement negotiated by political leaders is ultimately accepted within the broader society and implemented on the ground. The conflicts in the South Caucasus seem intractable, and yet over the years, many initiatives have arisen to foster cooperation across conflict divides in the areas of environment, economy and natural resource management. These initiatives aimed to support dialogue, confidence-building and conflict transformation. Is the South Caucasus public familiar with such initiatives? Do they make any real impact on conflict resolution? What room is there for a deeper involvement of the South Caucasus independent media in promoting such civil society regional cooperation initiatives? How could the media and civil society work together towards creating a constituency of peace in the South Caucasus?

PANEL 3: Shaping Compromise in the South Caucasus: What Room Is There for a Public Debate on the Commercial and Economic Value of Peace?

Creating platforms for exchange of information on, for example, energy, transport, trade issues, including their possible social implications, or the rehabilitation of the territories affected by the conflict and the return of IDPs to their homeland, has been considered as a soft form of confidence building cooperation. This way, political leaders might be offered flexibility on making the tough decisions related to conflict resolution, through providing them with a thorough consideration of post-conflict regional development scenarios.

In that context, the critical role of the private sector as the driving force in energizing a regional network and in making economic cooperation possible has been highlighted by recent research. Besides, it is often argued that promoting small scale joint enterprises could also help building the constituencies for peace. Could a different way of thinking be instilled in the minds of decision makers in the South Caucasus through highlighting the commercial and economic value of peace? What room is there for starting a public debate on the socio-economic advantages and disadvantages of choosing peace over the current state of war? How could the media help in promoting such a public debate?

BREAKOUT GROUPS: Developing a Constructive Media Campaign

Following up from the successful implementation of this new format enabling the consideration of two sets of conflicts simultaneously and in detail, participants will be convened to discuss the content of a sample media campaign that would support the existing peace initiatives.

The process will be parallel discussions focusing on concrete proposals for two sets of frozen conflicts; the Georgia/Russia/Abkhazia/South Ossetia group (Euterpé), and the Armenia/Azerbaijan/Nagorno-Karabakh group (Thalia). Each discussion group will have a rapporteur who will report on the solution, or conditions for solution if any. As usual, discussions take place under Chatham House rules, and no photos will be permitted during this session. The rapporteur's reports are then used to feed the interactive discussion that closes the proceedings.

Programme

Thursday, 12 November 2015

till 18.30 Arrival of the participants

19.00 **Words of Welcome**

Andreas F. WANNEMACHER, Directorate General for Security Policy, Austrian Ministry of Defence and Sports, Vienna

Official Dinner

Friday, 13 November 2015

07.00 – 09.00 Breakfast

09.00 – 09.15 **Introduction to the Study Group “Regional Stability in the South Caucasus” and Administrative Remarks**

COL Ernst M. FELBERBAUER and Benedikt HENSELLEK, Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna

09.15 – 09.30 **Words of Welcome**

LTG Erich CSITKOVITS, Commandant, Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna

09.30 – 10:00 **Opening Speech**

Mehmuda MIAN, Lohaki Foundation, London

10.00 – 11.30 **PANEL 1: The Media market in the South Caucasus and in Russia: Interests and Stakeholders**

Chair: Frederic LABARRE, RSSC SG Co-chair, PfP Consortium, Garmisch-Partenkirchen

The Media in Russia

Anton TAMAROVICH, Higher School of Economics, Moscow

The Media in Georgia

Vakhtang MAISAIA, Caucasus International University, Tbilisi

The Media in Armenia

Benjamin POGHOSYAN, Institute for National Security Studies, Yerevan

The Media in Azerbaijan

Ahmad ALILI, Center for Economic and Social Development, Baku

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee Break

12.00 – 13.30 **PANEL 2: Media's Interaction with the Civil Society: Producing the News and Shaping the Media Messages**

Chair: COL Ernst FELBERBAUER, Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna

The Media in War and Peace

Beka BAJELIDZE, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Tbilisi

The Media and Society in Azerbaijan

Emil AGAZADE, Westbourne Consultants, London

The Media and Society in South Ossetia

Zarina SANAKOEVA, Ekho Yuzhnei Ossetii, Tskhinval

The Media and Society in Armenia

Emma MARGARYAN, Glasgow University, Krakow

13.30 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 16.00 **PANEL 3: Shaping Compromise in the South Caucasus: What Room Is There for A Public Debate on the Commercial and Economic Value of Peace?**

Chair: George NICULESCU, RSSC SG Co-chair, European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels

View from Azerbaijan

Elkhan NURIYEV, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Baku

View from Russia

Angelina GROMOVA, Moscow State Linguistic University, Moscow

View from Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh

Ashot MARGARYAN, Eurasian Research & Analysis Institute, Yerevan

View from the Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh

Ayaz SALMANOV, Azerbaijani Community of Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku

16.00 – 16.30 Coffee Break

16.30 – 18.00 **Interactive Discussion**

Moderation: Craig NATION, US Army War College, Carlisle

Saturday, 14 November 2015

07.00 – 09.00 Breakfast

09.00 – 10.30 **BREAKOUT GROUPS:**

Group Euterpé

Chair: Frederic LABARRE, RSSC SG Co-chair, PfP Consortium, Garmisch-Partenkirchen

Group Thalia

Chair: George NICULESCU, RSSC SG Co-chair, European Geopolitical Forum, Brussels

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee Break

11.00 – 11.30 **Report on Dyad Discussion:**

Rapporteur for Group Euterpé: Roger HILTON, Diplomatic Academy, Vienna

Rapporteur for Group Thalia: Oktay TANRISEVER, Middle East Technical University, Ankara

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee break

12.00 – 13.00 **Plenary Session: Interactive Debate for Policy Recommendations and Workshop Outlook**

Moderation: Frederic LABARRE, Co-chair, RSSC SG, PfP Consortium, Garmisch-Partenkirchen

13.00 – 13.30 **Official Closing Remarks**

13.30 Lunch

Departure to the Side Programme/Individual Departures

Sunday, 15 November 2015

Individual Departures