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Sturdy Choices for 21st Century: Conflicts and Security of Post-Soviet Space

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Introduction

Security is a gist for human life. Feeling secure means to be imperturbable against threats and pavor. Security and safety is also core value for actors in international relations. Causticity of incapacities of states to pursue secure and safe national and international policies is quite familiar for the Post-Soviet Space. We will examine insecurity and respective threats from a State perspective.

Events which are in progress in the region nowadays and around it during the recent period, have both caused disillusionment and established prerequisites for certain expectations. From the very first days after dissolution of Soviet Union, when the post-Soviet countries reclaimed their independence, level of security in the region has been constantly changing. The regional states often claimed that relative insecurities for Post-Soviet countries were result of attempts by external sources aimed at weakening the regional states and gaining solid foothold. Thus, successor states have designed an own, legible paradigm for threat perceptions. However, these changes were not a result of development of separate internal processes, underway in the region's states, or the policy of external powers, which historically always affect this region. These changes were predetermined by both of the above, extremely interconnected factors.

It is worth mentioning that the issue of interdependence of domestic and foreign security of the post-Soviet space, and especially South Caucasus, has been deliberately avoided by almost all governments. This was even more damaging in terms of ensuring consistent security for all three states of the region, since taking into account the interdependence of domestic and foreign security is especially important for small states of a regional scale. More so, if they are located in a region, which is significant for the world from the economic and military-political point of view.

The Post-Soviet states have suffered greatly from insecure regional infrastructure, unresolved conflicts, political-military instabilities, socio-economic hardships and other domestic or international threats.

The security architecture of Post-soviet space should be discussed from the perspective of realism. With each successor state allying with a different power and having different state interests, the region has become polarized. Only tworegional states - Georgiaand Ukraine - are boldly trying to leave the Russian influence and striving for closer ties with Euro-Atlantic community. Others, still continue living under their authoritative regimes and do not look towards west.Russia is playing a dual game in the post-Soviet region -pretending to facilitate stabilization and in fact is destabilizing

the region. On the one hand, there is Russia the "Conflict-Mediator", – the one that disguises itself as interested "truth-seeker", brokers ceasefire and seeks to resolve the protracted conflicts via its mandate of a co-chair of OSCE Minsk Group. On the other hand, there is Russia the Provoker-thus creating a more conflict-ridden and unsecure region. Apparently, what Russia wants to achieve is to maintain influence over the region, be apparent in each conflict and involved on all sides. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, Russia seeks for retaining control over the region by not loosening the reins of power and thus, providing possibility for outside interference.

Russia's imperial instinct is tremendously strong. Moreover, the most exemplary cases of Russia's resurgent imperial instincts in recent years wereRussia's aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea (and ongoing rumblings of the "Novorossia project"), the war in Georgia (continued creeping annexation of Georgian territory)and the attempts to prevent Ukraine and Georgia from joining NATO.Russia's aspirations for re-emerging as a global power has become even haughtier, after military engagement in SyriaSo, the paper also depicts the dividing lines in the region and the reasons why cross-border cooperation have withered.

The unresolved conflicts frozen in the post-Soviet territory prove that tensions between ethnic groups remain a threat to the overall stability of the region and thus, are the most stinging aspects of regional security. Furthermore, nowadays in the era of "energy game", the region has gained the greatest international significance and has been bounded in the centre of international interest. Every single region, rich with the hydrocarbons and having potential of becoming energy supplier, is especially valuable for energy dependent states. In addition to economic factors, the significance of the region is also endowed with the military-political point of view. Region's proximity to terrorist hazard areas, its geopolitical significance and regional states contribution to peacekeeping operations are another asset for region to be placed in the international limelight. For that reasons, the region has become the area of diverse interests and the involvement of internal and external players, including international organizations, have increased in regional politics.

Problem and Goal Statement

The thesis aims to identify and raise awareness of the stinging threats and challenges in the post-Soviet Space, as well as the protracted conflicts continuing without a viable solution. As well as, implications to conflict and security, examining the security threats and therefore, its effect on the military, political, economic, social, informational and other kind of processes.

Think about war. Think about conflict. As hard as it is to think about violence, it is difficult to imagine the decisions to go to war, how to wage war, and how war ends without taking into account the experience of war and especially how the weapons used in war affect human lives. How do nations and non-state actors enter into and resolve conflict? Analysing the somewhat remarkable resemblance between existing conflicts in the post–Soviet space and examining of how do we move towards peace and security? What is the "responsibility to protect" and how does the international community respond to this mandate? What are the viable ways of conflict resolution and can opportunities for diplomacy, peacebuilding and peace-making help to ameliorate these violent conflicts?

The goal of the research is to elucidate the importance and pungency of post-Soviet conflict and security, discuss the conditions that foster successful negotiation and the international bodies that exist to resolve today's conflicts in Post-Soviet Space – as well as their likelihood for success and answer central research questions.

Research Objectives

One of the objectives of the paper is to examine if there ever existed or exist nowadays objective prerequisites for ending up with a different geopolitical picture in the region and disperse people's cherished hopes for resolving regional conflicts without united efforts (and goodwill) from Russia, the West and affected countries. Moreover, the paper aims to detect if the Western countries, especially US and EU, are ready to "defend" their interests and allies on post-Soviet territory.

Research Questions

Furthermore, study ponders upon and respond to the same set of questions. These are: What are the key changes that have taken place in the debate on security "architecture"of the post-Soviet space? What lessons can be drawn from that experience? What were the key factors driving change? What is the role of existing European and global security institutions in conflict prevention and resolution in the post-Soviet space? Consequently, what are the main problems and issues to be addressed today? Based on this analysis, what are the likely currents in this area to be reckoned with at the threshold of the 21st century?

Practical and Theoretical Value

Despite the notion of security is itself restrictive in terms of definition, still it might not be possible to wrap the full range of legitimate issues in Conflicts and Security of the Post-Soviet Space in the 21st century. While focusing the regional security assessment, the work doesn't aim to simply prepare a checklist of regional security threats and challenges and respective future implications. Rather, the reasoning is based on analytical and thematic approach.

Particularly, the work attempts to investigate and define the changing nature of regional security, exploring focal themes most likely to dominate not only the regional but also international security agenda. Furthermore, the work targets to explore existent restraints for the building regional security policy and the realist assumptions towards it. It also examines the volatile nature of existent conflicts and the expanded security agenda of regional states and international organizations involved in the regional processes.

The following sets of issues are discussed in detail: the security deficit, dividing lines among post-Sovietstates, the role-players in the regional politics and the future implications. As well as the changing nature of regional politics is examined, with special emphasis on the constraints and hindering factors.

The findings of the work are not based solely on theoretical assumptions, but they are more focused on empirical experience and opinions of experts in international relations, survey analysis and interviews. The practical value of the thesis is derived from its actuality and novelty. The study findings would be interesting for researchers, professionals and academia focus on Post-Soviet Space and Conflictology. As well as the relevant findings may have practical significance for cherishing reconciliation efforts and empowering public diplomacy as a tool of conflict resolution. Furthermore, the work gives impetus for young researchers conducting further researches in this filed.

To sum up, the practical value of the research will be interesting for government officials who work over security and conflict resolution issues, scientists, representatives of mass-media, NGOs, students, especially in the fields of Social sciences, international relations and history.

Actuality and Novelty

The post-soviet space is on high security agenda nowadays because of several factors. First, Russian expansionist and imperial nature, its aspirations to restore Russia's greatness within the imperial borders concerns west and international society as a whole. Then, the geopolitical location and the relevant significance of the region makes it a fulcrum area. Third, the vast natural resources is another factor underlying region's importance (especially in the light of Russia's energy leverage and lucrative deals, as well as the complexity of EU problem of energy diversification). And at last, the protracted conflicts in the region and Russian expansionist policy and military aggression towards regional states (Georgia and Ukraine) emphasizes sententious importance of the regional security.

By taking into consideration the 2008 August War in Georgia and 2014 events in Ukraine, as well as recently escalated conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2016, the significance and actuality of regional security assessmentconsiderably raises.

The work is based on analysis and the results presented on active involvement of the International organizations and the promotion of cooperation among the countries and non-state actors in preserving peace and security in the region.

Surprisingly, barring very few exceptions, most of the affected countries are today confronted with similar security concerns. They may differ in dimension and intensity according to the size and location of the country. But beyond such differences, majority of the states, for the first time since their creation, find themselves in the same boat.

The shift of perceptions from traditional threats and challenges of overall regional security to relatively new, emerging security threats is, as of today, still extremely slow. Thus, we can come up with a conclusion that the multi-dimensionality of security architecture, relevant threats and challenges, actuality and pervasiveness are becoming in important parts of the world one if not the most serious concern. Identifying the attributes that obstruct preserving peace and security, presented methods of conflict resolution of regional conflicts is one of the most important novelty of the research, as well as reconciliation policy analysis through the tools of public diplomacy.

Research Methodology

Parallel analysis of global, regional and domestic peculiarities are deemed for broadening the understanding of the region's security deficit and examine the factors affecting regional security nowadays. Furthermore, the exploring readiness and tools for cherishing reconciliation efforts and peacemaking activities are yet another attributes for crisis management efforts.

Interdisciplinary methods of research are central methodological tools, particularly discussions of military-political, economic, historical, geopolitical reasons of conflicts.

Many experts consider that expanding democracy is directly proportional to a more secured world. A few regional states have expressed development in consolidating democratic institutions, however, conflicts at local and regional levels still occur and outbreak. The escalation of any existent conflict in the region pose potential threat for further flare ups, since the overall security architecture is closely interconnected and allots the certain familiarities (i.e. the indirect or interested sides of the conflict). Existent regional threats may transfer to the global levels and impose insecurity for the broader region and the world in general. Furthermore, Russia is another significant factor in the regional politics and a reckoned force for the western countries. Thus, the hypothesis of whetherthe Western countries, especially US and EU, are ready to "defend" their interests and allies on post-soviet territory and maintain "a counter-Russia" policy is tested and analyzed through different applications and tools of methodology.

The paper comprises the mixed methodology, including both, qualitative and quantitative methods. Furthermore, the textual data format is used as a valuable tool of data collection and the semi-structured methods are applied, like selecting focus groups and in-depth interviews.

These methods are applied for a clearer understanding of Russian hard and soft power politics in post-soviet space. As for qualitative methods, the study consists of interviews conducted among the specialists and experts in the field. The format of interview is based on open-ended questions, does not limiting interviewees in simply "yes" or "no" responses and thus, providing participants with the possibility to express ideas with their words.

In addition to textual data analyses and interviews, statements of high officials, speeches and newspaper articles have been used as primary sources of data collection along with the secondary sources such as books and scientific articles focusing on post-soviet security architecture were

analysed. For tracing the region's democratization processes and exploring relative characteristics, the NDI and other primary survey sources were processed.

Finally, iterative study design format is used and the participant of survey are purposively sampled. Thus, participant's profiles are selected in relevance of central research questions.

Structure of the Dissertation

The research comprises of introduction, four chapters and conclusions and recommendations. Chapters are focused on explanatory nature of the conflict, respective security issues, the real and existing threats, general security assessment as well as other existent threats the region faces today. Conclusions and recommendations part summarizes the overall situation in terms of conflicts and security, draws prospects of post-soviet space, including recommendations for the increasing awareness of tough choices of the region for the 21st century and analysing its vital importance, as well drawing conclusions for strengthening the global processes on security issues.

Brief Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The beginning of 21st century is remarkable by abrupt challenges worldwide, that also trends to dominate security agenda of Post-Soviet Space. The inequality between rich and poor has become even more vital, increased economic and political dependency (induced by "globalization") become exploitative to comparatively weak and poor states. New armed conflicts have broken out, as current events in Ukraine (that seem to change on a weekly, if not daily basis) and exploded frozen conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh with increased threat of conflict grew into a full-scale war. Current escalations have brought the extended peace and recovery processes in the region to an end. In this regard, peace-making efforts will require a push from regional and international powers.

"Conflict" is undoubtedly a main threat to security at all levels, starting with the family and ending with the world. In conditions of conflict inside the "levels" or between them, it is impossible to ensure real, stable and consistent security.

Proceeding from all of the above mentioned, it is also known, that in order to create a real, stable and consistent system of security, you need to do the following:

- Objectively and accurately define the existing and potential threats (difficulties – objective and subjective criteria);

- Neutralize the conflict threat (through preventive activities);

- In case of existing conflicts, resolve them as quickly as possible.

The literature on peace and security studies suggests that certain progress has been achieved in 21st century in creating a "defence architecture" for effective protection of regional peace and security. One of the most efficient tools for controlling and managing security atmosphere of the region is evident in political level to mandate peacekeeping missions.

In order to analyse conflicts and security of post-soviet space, it is essential to understand the essence of conflict and the relevant conflict theories.

However, as already discussed above, the main source and motive of conflict is inequality. The links between inequality and violent conflict has been formulated a long time ago by international relations theorists. Karl Marx's "conflict theory" claims that society is in a state of perpetual conflict due to the competition for limited resources. It also argues that domination and power is essential for maintaining the social order, further denouncing consensus and conformity as strategic aspects for holding social order. The theory depicts that wealthy and powerful actors are struggling for holding power by all possible means, mainly by suppressing powerless and those unable to resist.

The group entitlement theory (Horowitz 1985) places more explicit emphasis on ethnic factors which accompany the economic and political (Gurr 1995). Despite ethnic diversity does not in itself seem to be a cause of war, by looking at regional conflicts we will see that ethnic contradictions are vital in all of them.

In the last decade, the field of international relations has undergone a revolution in the study of conflict. Despite the fact that the earlier theories understanding conflicts emphasized the importance of individuals, states, and state systems as attributes of conflict, the relatively new "bargaining theory of war" has explained violence as the product of private information with incentives to misrepresent, problems of credible commitment, and issue indivisibilities. This new approach understands war as a bargaining failure between conflicting parties that positions both sides involved in a conflict in a worse situation compared to the one if they could be able to negotiate for an effective and peaceful solution acceptable by all involved in a process.

Despite the disruptive character of conflict, trends of speaking on relatively positive aspects of conflict become pulsed. Though many of us tend to view conflict as a negative occurrence, it has both positive and negative aspects, which arise both during and as a result of interactions between conflicting individuals or groups.

Chapter 2: Glimpse of Security Architecture of Post-Soviet Space

Although more than two decades have passed since the USSR crumbled, its legacy is still helping to shape security within, and relations between, former member states, as well as their relations with other states in the world. Already back in the 90's of the past century, it seemed like peace and security should have been within the interests of not just this region, but of the whole world, notably due to region's geographic location and geo-strategic potential and its increasing importance as the main link of transport and communication projects.

Apart from the geopolitical significance, the stability of Post-Soviet Space is imperiled by numerous domestics and transnational security challenges, such as: unresolved conflicts, socio-economic hardships, organized crime, terrorism, trafficking and migration. The scale and scope of these transnational problems require a coordinated action. Since the region is intensely divided by conflicts and the competing interests of regional powers, the region would benefit from a greater cross-border collaboration. However, regional cooperation is not as well developed as it could be, hampering economic development, security and further destabilizing the area.

After collapsing the Soviet Union, ethnically, linguistically and culturally different regional states were left behind. Newly emerged independent states were (and still are) struggling for forming strong domestic and foreign policies and consolidate state governing authorities, however, the interest of diverse population and diverse policies towards them resulted in conflicting situations, that continues even nowadays. Tajikistan and Georgia have experienced the civil wars, turmoil and disorder have covered Kyrgyzstan and the armed conflict arose in Moldova and Russia. However, other successor states proved that multicultural and multi-ethnic societies are not always conflict-prone.

The Politics of the Black Sea Region are affected with many diverse political, security and economic interests. The region is a dynamic and complex area in which many regional and international actors have key interests, including Russia, the US and EU. The European Union stretches to the sea's western coast where it meets former Soviet territory as well as EU candidate

Turkey. Changing relationships with the USA, China, as well as with institutions such as the European Union and NATO, are shaping the security agendas of states in the region and beyond.

Current democratization processes of Post-Soviet space is not is complimentary for Russia. Creating insecurities (military confrontations, energy leverage, economic (trade) wars, etc.) has been approved mechanism of Russian foreign policy towards Black Sea democracies. Specifically, Russia used the ultimate goal of its foreign policy against Georgia and Ukraine, with the aim to prevent them from turning to the Euro-Atlantic direction and demonstrate to other Post-Soviet states that explosive democratization might not lead to the proclaimed goals of stability, prosperity and security.

Herewith, the most adverse in the process is the hard power politics manifested by Russia against Georgia and Ukraine. New armed conflicts have broken out, as Russian-Georgian war concluded with 20% occupation of Georgian territories and as unfortunate current events in Ukraine that seem to change on a weekly, if not daily basis. In reacting to the pro-Western regime change in Ukraine in February 2014 by reincorporating Crimea into Russia, and later by supporting an anti-Kiev revolt in the eastern Donbas region, Russia broke free from the U.S. domination in post-Cold War system and openly challenged Washington.

Chapter 3: Security Deficit of the Region

The following unresolved conflicts are frozen on the territory of Post-Soviet Space: that between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno- Karabakh, those in Georgia over the secessionist territories of Abkhazia and So called South Ossetia, that in Ukraine followed by Russian annexation of Crimea and the de-facto state of Transnistria.

It is very difficult to speak about any possible way of solving existing conflicts in peaceful manner, especially after these conflicts have already passed through so called – "hot phase" – the phase of military confrontation and bloodshed. Russia-Georgian war in August 2008, recent flare ups in Nagorno-Karabakh and Russia's annexation of Crimea have complicated the situation much more.

With every year that the deadlocked conflicts in the region continues without a solution and unfortunately, there is no vital way to the conflict resolution in the region. It is also clear that without cooperation of leading states and international organizations with Russia, solving these conflicts does not seem realistic.

It is obvious that international society should be actively involved if they want to pursue strengthening of democratic institutions in the region and maintain peace and security.

In spite of all regional states conceive security concerns differently and having different approaches to state interests, they still can collaborate in terms the aspects threatening all of them and thus are of the global concerns. Socio-economic concerns, energy security, informational security, environmental issues, combating with the terrorism, drug-smuggling, organized crime and etc. are pushing security matters to a high level and make all regional states to sit on the negotiation table.

Chapter 4: Future Implications

One of the important aspects of Post-Soviet politics is the feature that there unlikely are long term and sturdy alliances among the majority of regional states. One of the major reasons for that is of course the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which emerged in the beginning of 90s between Azerbaijan and Armenia and is still serving as the major source of irritation between neighbours. On the other hand, Russian military intervention in Ukraine resulted in increased political turmoil and acute subordinacy between Kyiv and Moscow. Furthermore, Russian allied secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Transnistria, as well as seizure of 20% of Georgian territories, makes the cooperation image or the region adversely complicated.

In the past decade Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have made significant progress in moving away from authoritarian rule towards more democratic governance. This progress is recognized and acknowledged in these countries themselves, as well as by the international community. At the same time, serious shortcomings and drawbacks have accompanied the process of reform. These countries' independence in the initial stages brought the disintegration of regional economic ties which, among other factors, contributed to increased unemployment and the impoverishment of many people. The withdrawal of total state control and supervision in many areas was conducive to a flourishing of corruption and fraud. Freedom of speech and political organization coupled with very little experience with democracy and political culture added to political violence and instability. However, many of regional states still greatly suffer from non-democratic state institutions and relevant consequences.

Overall, newly independent and weakened states have often failed to provide their citizens with the preconditions and opportunities for a peaceful and prosperous life. As a result, many people in the South Caucasus associate their grim living conditions not only with the policies of certain

politicians and government officials but also with the general democratic principles that are formally declared by the state authorities. More detailed information of democratic assessment of regional states can be found in chapter 4 with numerical analysis and results of respective surveys.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Let us remember that the main threats and, consequently, the factors of security, which are universally well known: military, political, economic (energy can be distinguished separately,due to the special significance of energy resources and prominent threats of manipulating with energy resources in lucrative political deals), social (which includes human rights, demography, etc.), cultural ,environmental and informational.

Already for quite a lengthy period of time, terrorism has been singled out as a separate threat, which started more and more actively exploiting the Eurasian space. Furthermore, illegal trade, arms race and drug smuggling pose potential threats to security architecture of the region.

It is known, that in spite of existence of admissible threats on various levels, they still affect security and that, when talking about security, even if only one component is missing, one cannot talk anymore about "consistent and stable" security (thus, for example, it is practically impossible for states of the region to have common environmental threats and a common system of environmental security and different military-political threats and systems of security; maybe "on different levels", but not different).

Proceeding from the abovementioned, every person, state or region, if they want to have realistic, stable and consistent security, need security with all of its component parts.

"Conflict" is undoubtedly a main threat to security at all levels, starting with the family and ending with the world. In conditions of conflict inside the "levels" or between them, it is impossible to ensure real, stable and consistent security.

In accordance to the assumptions drew above, it is also known, that in order to create a real, stable and consistent system of security, you need to do the following:

- Objectively and accurately define the existing and potential threats and challenges (difficulties – objective and subjective criteria);
- Neutralize the conflict threats (through preventive activities);

- In case of existing conflicts, resolve them as quickly as possible or consolidate conflict management processes.

Furthermore, for small, comparatively weak states (such as majority of former soviet republics), the main domestic and daily challenging threat is still an undemocratic state system. Its main characteristics are: undemocratic (or insufficiently democratic) Constitution and electoral legislation.

- As a consequence: corrupt Parliament and undemocratic laws;

- As a consequence: corrupt and undemocratic executive and judicial systems.

All of the above causes ignoring of the law, corruption and refusal to implement any democratic reforms, not just from the side of the executive and judicial authority, but, what is possibly more significant, from the side of the population of the country. As a result, you end up with a "pseudo or failed state" and constant economic crisis and social tension, inability to resolve the conflicts existing inside the country, as well as the threat of arising of new conflicts and collapse of integrity of the country, which constantly cause destabilization in the broader region.

Indeed, main foreign threats of a country proceed exactly from its main domestic threats and are predetermined both by weakness of the national security system of the country itself and by attempts of outside hostile powers and power centers to contribute to this weakness and use it (including "conservation" of the existing conflicts and provoking new ones), in order to establish their influence over the country.

Security assurance in the region under consideration is essential for the member states, for the following reasons: firstly, due to the historic and geographic reasons security issues for many years have been more important in this region rather than in other ones. Secondly, the living conditions of the millions of their citizens or representatives of their nationalities are not just an issue for their own governments. Thirdly, security guarantees National interests of Post-Soviet countries in the region, which are:

- Maintaining friendly relations with their neighbors, regardless of who is in power in these countries;

- Prevention of "transit" security threats arising outside the region;

- Ensuring internal stability and the absence of conflicts between them.

If the above defined domestic threats are present in at least one or several countries of a region, they exceptionally intensify outside threats, not just for separate states of the region, but for the region as a whole.

This is especially apparent in such regions, which are objects of attention, and consequently confrontation, of leading world powers or power centers, due to their special strategic, economic and military-political significance.

In such a situation, establishing a real, stable and consistent system of regional security is possible only in theory and only provided that there undoubtedly exist several extremely significant conditions.

The most important of these conditions is, first of all, is existence of a high level of ensuring internal security of the regional states and agreement between these states for finding ways to avoid existent common threats and challenges.

Following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia started a wide-ranging and large-scale militarization program, which will allow Moscow to establish a dominant position in the basin. An elaborate military infrastructure is under construction in Crimea to combat air and surface threats, to hinder NATO's ability to protect its littoral member states and deliver military assistance to its partners in the region. Russia also seeks to increase its military reach into adjacent regions such as Central Europe, the Balkans, the South Caucasus, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Northern Middle East. Russia's military build-up can be used to disrupt maritime trade and energy routes, which will negatively affect the economies of the Black Sea littoral states and threaten the European energy diversification scheme.

Despite alarming statements from littoral member states, NATO has over the last years failed to create a sufficient security architecture in the Black Sea basin. After the latest NATO summit in Warsaw, the alliance is expected to move from reassurance to actual deterrence or defense measures vis-a-vis Russia to reinforce NATO's eastern flank, which also encompasses the Black Sea region. These decisions are important steps, but will not entail a significant change in the existing imbalance of power vis-a-vis Russia in the Black Sea region.

The most affective and enduring formula for strengthening security in the region and eliminating most prominent military-political security challenges could be preserving balance of power. Thus,

balancing all role-players in the region and at the same time achieving collective security partnership of regional states could be a guarantee of maintaining stability and security in Post-Soviet Space. The role of civil society institutions is also promising in conflict management and resolution processes in united Post-Soviet space.

The conducted research reveals that researchers from Social Science disciplines and experts in the relevant field agree on common idea of unification. 88% of interviewers said that regional cooperation and unification is essential tool in the sake of regional prosperity and finding solutions for vital risks and threats. Post-soviet society should agree on collective effort and start cooperation from regional priorities.

Unfortunately, the political, economic and social reform process in all regional countries has been slow and continually suffers important setbacks. Societies in significant recession and poverty are concentrated on daily social issues and problems. The findings of conducted survey are further strengthened by Public Attitude Results survey carried out for NDI by CRRC Georgia that has publicly revealed the territorial integrity and political security are substantially overweighed by basic economic and social needs. That unfavorable situation substantially threatens strengthening of democratic institutions in all regional countries and does not provide any possibility and platform for resolution of frozen conflict in peaceful manner.

But from my point of view, the only way out of crisis is negotiation. There should be focus on continuous activity of conflict management and resolution together. There is no alternative to the development of regional dialogue (together with pragmatic policy with Russia) if we desire to overcome the crisis, the dialogue on a broad range of issues related to regional relations should continue to be developed without any preconditions, and no topics should be excluded from the discussions and all sides engaged should promote and encourage the return of Internally Displaced Persons to their respective areas of origin.

The abide militarization of the region as a result of regional conflicts remnants one of the foremost threats. So, I think public opinion should be mobilized for addressing this threat and to advocate for political decisions in this regard. In any situation the way out always occurs, just the dialogue needs to be developed based on a "step-by-step" principle in order to promote movement towards the main goal – stage-by-stage normalization of regional states relations with Russia.
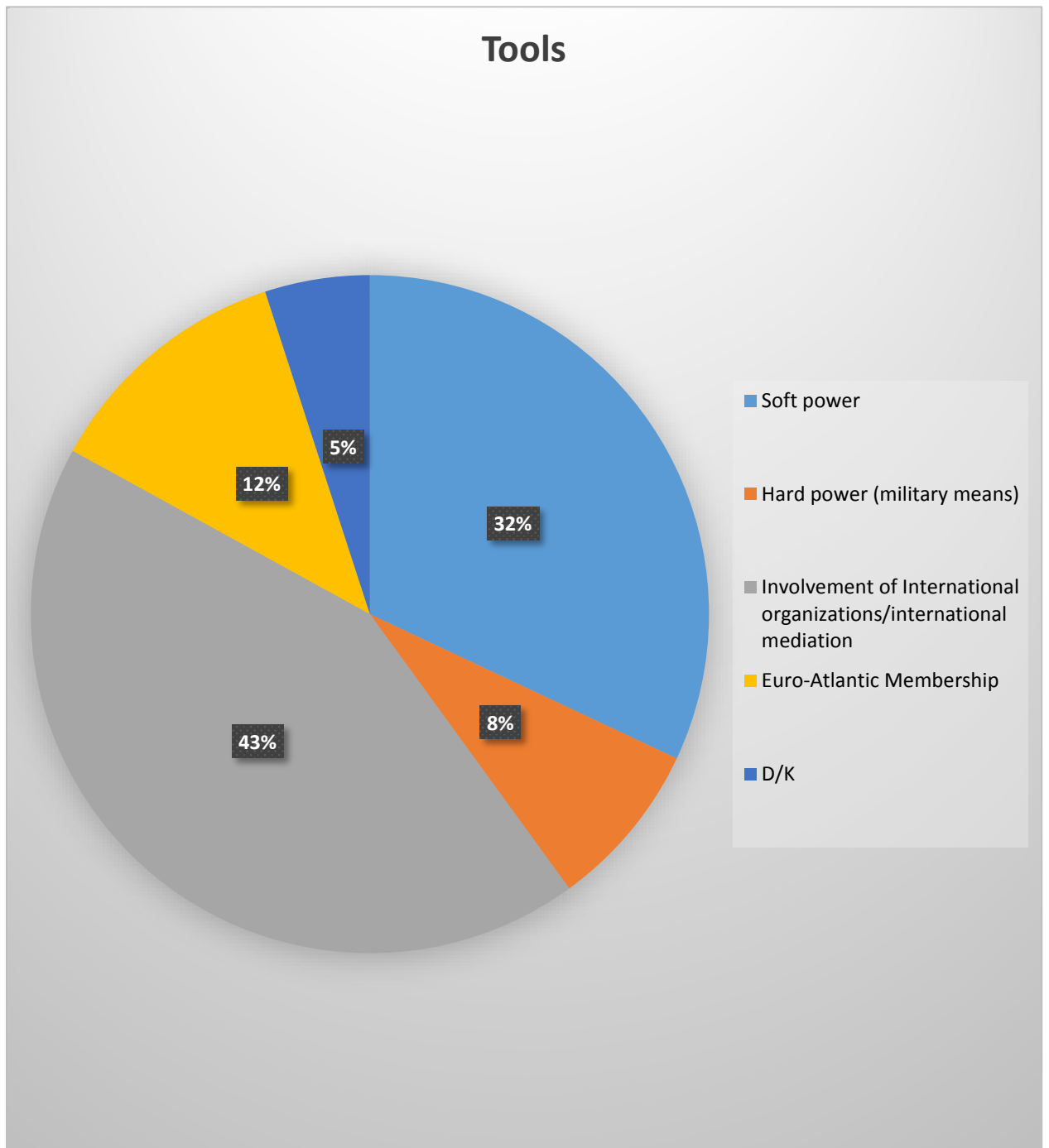
It is extremely important to create an adequate informational space, resources and tools to further develop a public discourse on the above mentioned issues and directions. In order to achieve an impact on a broader public level, the dialogue needs to be continued on different levels and in different formats, with civil society playing a key role in this process.

International society also agrees that negotiation is only solution. The figure 1 below shows the findings of survey conducted in relation to the prospects of conflicts resolution in Post-Soviet Space. As implied, majority votes for peaceful resolution of existing conflict. Those who have experienced the terrible consequences of the war say that there is no place for military escalations and wars in 21st century. The most triumphant tool in conflict resolution processes are soft power policies: cooperation, long-term negotiations, active involvement and efficacious efforts of international organizations, International mediation and society and informal (public) diplomacy.

As majority of respondents (75%) in survey identify Russia as most challenging role-player in regional politics, they also call for western assistance as a main tool for deterring Russian expansionist policies. Whereas, the West has limited resources to prevent Russia and its policy of aggrandizement. "The only available tool is imposition of economic and visa sanctions against Russia and isolation of Russia from global governing (expelling from G8, freezing the Kremlin's participation in many global events etc.), which has minimal effect and impact on Kremlin's imperial behavior. Besides, the West is not united against imposed sanctions. Participation of EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, P-M of Italy Matteo Renzi and former French President Nicolas Sarkozy in the work of Sankt-Petersburg International Forum (16-18 June, 2016) and their formal meetings with president Putin, have proved that. Slowly the West is returning to the "business as usual" with the Kremlin"- says Professor, Amiran Kavadze in interview.

We all agree that the contributing actors/factors for resolving protracted conflicts should be united efforts from Russia, the West and affected regional countries. However, it is a dream to wait until Russia expresses its goodwill for resolution regional "frozen" conflicts, as for the Kremlin the best solution is to keep frozen all existing conflicts in near abroad. We should keep in mind that the main actor in regional politics is still Russia and any positive developments is quite an unachievable goal under Putin's regime. Furthermore, it is quite clear that neither USA nor EU can be engaged in military conflict with Russia. The Kremlin recognizes only extensive military force to obey the West's requirements. That is why the West support only can be based on and limited with political support and economic assistance which for the Kremlin means nothing for achieving their strategic interests in the region (Kavadze, 2016).

Figure 1: Tools and attributes for Conflicts Resolution

Tools

- Soft power
- Hard power (military means)
- Involvement of International organizations/international mediation
- Euro-Atlantic Membership
- D/K

32% — Soft power
8% — Hard power (military means)
43% — Involvement of International organizations/international mediation
12% — Euro-Atlantic Membership
5% — D/K

The conflict transformation approach supports citizen diplomacy as a tool for conflict resolution. This is population that suffers mostly from the conflict. The normalization and warming up relationship between the people of conflicting parties could facilitate the reconciliation and peacekeeping efforts. Public Democracy, or sometimes referred as "Citizen Diplomacy" provides a "peace corridor" between contradicted parties by addressing conflict and hostility at all levels of society and societal interaction. Moreover, the strengthening of civil society role and involvement and citizen-based reconciliation policies incur principal importance for preserving peace-building and peace-making efforts in all sectors of society.

The future of regional stability in the region depends on the balmy balance of interests and approaches among states and among different levels of interaction. Stable and strong central state institutions must accommodate the wishes and historical memories of the autonomous regions. These same institutions must put the ground for regional dialogue and cooperation, based on mutual understandings and concessions. This would bluster region's global position vis-à-vis external players. Fragile, undemocratic or often insufficiently democratic state institutions, policies and relevant processes weaken the possibility of formulating a common policy for security, stability and regional development. We should keep in mind that there are no permanent friends and enemies in international relations, there are permanent state interests that determine each country's domestic and foreign policy dimensions. Thus, the total dependence on strategic alliances, which more or less keeps a balanced situation in the region is very dangerous. For the region's stability it is necessary to frame wider security complex system corresponding the region's internal problems and opportunities, by allowing broader formats of cooperation.

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