

## **Overlapping and Competitive Regional Security Policy-Making in the Caucasus**

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### **Abstract**

Security policy-making in critical regions is one of the main concerns of the research centers and academic institutes. Security-building in the regions like the Caucasus is important because the historical roots of conflict could be seen in the policies of various countries. Whenever some manifestations of authoritarianism can be seen, some countries are in the state of cooperative action. However, the Caucasus is a context for violent confrontation of some groups with different cultural, identity and historical features. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the regional security structure was changed and, instead, the cycle of successive empires. The Russians managed to incorporate the region in their developing empire. In 1992-2016, the stage was set for the phased promotion of regional security institutions. This process has been influenced by functionalism; neo-functionalism, regionalism and integration approaches. It also provides the ground for the actions such as peacekeeping, and arms control. Coordination of foreign policies could be seen as a sign of regional security policy-making in the Caucasus. In this context, regional crises are the main factors in the formation of a process which makes it inevitable for security-building. Part of the regional security policy-making in the Caucasus has been related to the participation in security cooperation with the

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UN and other regional and inter-regional institutions. In this geographical scope, a variety of governmental, non-governmental and inter-governmental institutions are responsible for implementation of the security-building processes. Hence, by 2016, 17 regional institutions have been responsible for conduction of joint peace-keeping and peace-making activities in the Caucasus. Historical indicators and processes impact regional security dynamics in Eurasia. It's for this reason that geographical and cultural issues are of a great importance to explain regional security policy-making in the Caucasus. Strategic security theoreticians insist that if a region faces the intersection of diverse cultures, it will face security problems. Therefore, understanding the realities of the regional security environment in the Caucasus requires a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the regional interactions of the actors such as Azerbaijan Republic, Armenia, Georgia, Nakhchivan autonomous region, Nagorno-Karabakh region, Adjara, Abkhazia, and Ossetia. The basic question of this article is "what are the features and symptoms of the regional security policy-making process in the Caucasus"? The article's hypothesis indicates that "regional security policy-making in the Caucasus after the cold war has an overlapping and competitive nature". Theoretical framework of this article is based on "overlapping security policy-making in quasi-chaos atmosphere". The research method is "content analysis and data analysis". From the whole set of data discussed in the article it could be concluded that whenever the relative power of some actors in geopolitical environments is declined or faced with fundamental changes, the stage will be set for expanding regional crises. In the Caucasus, Russia was considered as an influential regional and international power; but the regional crises have gradually weakened its position. Therefore, instead of trying to balance the power and security equation in the global sphere, Russia has no choice but to consolidate its position in the Caucasus, Central

Asia and “Near Abroad”. Thus, the symptoms of regional security policy-making in the Caucasus can be explained in the following propositions:

- Based on the NATO expansion approach, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization tries to expand its sphere of influence to the Caucasus. It’s obvious that the realization of such a process is incompatible with Russian security goals. In such circumstances we can see signs of phased competitiveness in the great power relations.
- Regional actors such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel are attempting to expand their spheres of influence in the region. In such circumstances we can see signs of unstable balance in the relations between regional actors. The main characteristic of the unstable balance is that the quality of the coalition between regional actors and great powers is put in the state of change.
- Political socialization in the Caucasian countries is limited and unstable. Whenever the signs of social security are limited to the environments with geopolitical capability and formations, the necessary grounds for multilateral cooperation is appeared. Any type of cooperation could have special effects on bilateral and multilateral relations.
- Preventive diplomacy is the most important pattern which could provide the grounds for confidence building, defend of the sovereignty and territorial integrity and coordination of the foreign policies of the Caucasian countries.
- The realization of the above-mentioned goals requires developing “Security Regionalism”. This means that the Euro-Atlantic complex is trying to provide the necessary grounds to expand the sphere of western security norms in the Caucasus. The crises in Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula will affect the Caucasian security policy-making pattern.

- Controlling “Regional Identities” is another factor which impacts the regional security mechanisms. Therefore, the regional security institutions will be replaced by regional and inter-regional organizations. In this process, necessities such as crisis management will be inevitable. Since stability and security equilibrium are limited in the Caucasus, “Regional Security Complexes” will not be formed in the Caucasian geopolitical arena.

**Keywords:** Caucasus security environment, institutional multilateralism, regionalism, security building, security policy making, vertex security.