

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES  
POLICY DEPARTMENT



**Russian  
military presence  
in the Eastern  
Partnership  
Countries**

SEDE



## WORKSHOP

# Russian military presence in the Eastern Partnership Countries

### ABSTRACT

The workshop was organized on June 15, 2016 at the initiative of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) with the aim of assessing the quantitative and qualitative parameters of Russian military presence in the Eastern Partnership Countries, and its implications for European security.

Dr. Anna Maria Dwyer, Analyst with the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and Coordinator of PISM's Eastern European Programme, covered Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Dr. Gäidz Minassian, Senior Lecturer at Sciences Po Paris and Associate Research Fellow at the French Fondation pour la Recherche stratégique, covered Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

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# WORKSHOP

POLICY DEPARTMENT, DG EXPO  
FOR THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
SECURITY AND DEFENCE (SEDE)



Wednesday 15.06.2016 – **15:00-16:00**

PAUL-HENRI SPAAK BUILDING – ROOM **P5B001**

CONTACT AND REGISTRATION: [poldep-expo@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:poldep-expo@europarl.europa.eu)



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## Russian military presence in the Eastern Partnership Countries

*Chairman: Anna FOTYGA*

# PROGRAMME OF THE WORKSHOP

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT



For the Sub-Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE)

## WORKSHOP

### Russian military presence in the Eastern Partnership countries

Wednesday, 15th June 2016

Brussels, **Paul-Henri Spaak Building, Room (P5B001)**

15.00-16.00h

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#### PROGRAMME

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**15.00-15.05 Welcome and introductory remarks by**

- **Anna Elżbieta FOTYGA**, Chair of the Sub-Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE)

**15.05-15.20 Russian military presence in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova**

- **Ms Anna Maria DYNER**, analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and Eastern Europe Programme Coordinator

**15.20-15.35 Russian military presence in South Caucasus**

- **Mr Gaïdz MINASSIAN**, Journalist and researcher

**15.35-15.55 Q&A**

**15.55-16.00 Concluding remarks by**

- **Ms Anna Elżbieta FOTYGA**, Chair of the Sub-Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE)

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES OF THE SPEAKERS

### **Ms Anna Maria Dyner**

**Anna Maria Dyner** is political scientist and specialist in Eastern affairs. She works as an analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) and the Eastern Europe Programme Coordinator. Her interests include domestic and foreign policy of Belarus and Russian Federation. She also deals with the hard security issues in the post-Soviet region including military reform and the modernisation of the Russia's military-industrial complex. Anna Maria Dyner is an author of various PISM analyzes and papers about Belarus and Russia. She has also written on Belarusian and Russian affairs for *Rzeczpospolita*, *Nowa Europa Wschodnia*, *EUobserver*, *New Eastern Europe*. Privately lover of football, Legia Warsaw in particular.

### **Mr Gaïdz MINASSIAN**

**Gaïdz MINASSIAN** is a political scientist and a specialist in post-Soviet (Caucasus, Central Asia) and Middle East affairs (Turkey, Iran, Arabic world). An associate research fellow at the Paris-based Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS), he covers conflict resolution, as well as domestic issues and foreign policies of the South Caucasus States. He is a co-author of two recent reports written for the French Ministry of Defense - one on the defence industries of Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, the other one on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. a Journalist at the French daily *Le Monde* (Debates Service), Gaïdz Minassian is also a lecturer at Sciences Po Paris (International Relations Department) and the author of several books on the South Caucasus and articles in French prominent international reviews (*Politique Etrangère*, *Questions internationales*, *Annuaire français des relations internationales*).

## PART I: CONTRIBUTION BY ANNA MARIA DYNER

### 1 Speech by Anna Maria Dyner (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine)

In the Soviet era, the organisation of the army and of the system of defending the Soviet space was based on three circles. The first, in which the best-equipped troops were in a permanent state of readiness, included the satellite states of the Soviet Union such as the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The second circle, in which units were not so well-equipped but were nevertheless at a very high level of combat readiness, included border Soviet republics such as the Baltic States, the Belarusian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR and the Moldavian SSR. The third circle included the interior of the Soviet Union and was the worst equipped. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Soviet army was withdrawn fully from former satellite states, and from a part of former previous Soviet republics such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. However, bilateral agreements between the Russian Federation and newly independent states such as Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine allowed some Russian troops or military bases to remain on their territories. This heritage explains today's situation as regards Russia's military presence in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

Cooperation between Russia and **Belarus** in the military field is governed by several agreements, among which: the Agreement on the construction, use and maintenance of the radiolocation station in Baranovichi, which is located on the territory of the Republic of Belarus (1995); the Agreement about the procedure of use and maintenance of the radio station in Vileyka (1995); the Agreement on the establishment of the Union State (1999); the Agreement on developing military-technical cooperation (2009); the Agreement on the joint air protection of the external border of the Union State, and the creation of a joint regional air defence system by Belarus and the Russian Federation (2012). One has only to look at the map to understand why this partnership with Belarus is important to Russia. The territory of Belarus constitutes a buffer zone for Moscow. In addition, the importance of Belarus is increased by the presence of major military installations on its territory: a radiolocation station in Hancevichi (outside Baranovichi), which is part of Russia's early warning system; and a communications centre for nuclear submarines, located in Vileyka. Both facilities are leased by Russia free of charge until 2020 (the corresponding agreements will certainly be extended beyond 2020).

Russian and Belarussian armed forces exercise together. Two categories of exercises deserve special attention – *Zapad* exercises and *Union Shield* exercises. The latest edition of the *Zapad* exercises took place on 20-26 September 2013; they were based on scenarios of Arab Spring events and assumed that external forces wanted to destabilise Belarus, but were opposed by the Belarusian army supported by the Russian air force, army and Marines. The latest *Union Shield* exercise lasted from 10 to 16 September 2015. The major part of the exercise took place in Russia (Leningrad, Pskov and Kaliningrad oblasts, Baltic Sea). Such exercises help Belarus sustain the capacities of national troops.

Belarussian servicemen get their education and training in Russian language. One should also mention the joint air defense system, which is aimed at enhancing defence capabilities in the direction of Eastern Europe and the role of CSTO. All these elements of cooperation allow Russia to de facto control the territory of Belarus.

To understand Russia's current military presence in **Moldova**, one has to go back to the 1990s and to remember the separatist and nationalist tensions that were prevailing by that time. The struggle between the government of the Republic of Moldova and the 'Dniester Republic' formed by the Russian minority living on the left bank of the Dniester River began in the autumn of 1991. In June 1992 General Major Alexander Lebed took charge of the 14th Army, which had strong ties to the separatist forces in the Transnistria region. During the period of active fighting that year, elements of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army played an



active role in support of the separatists. After the conflict the peacekeeping force established in Moldova was made up primarily of Russian troops.

Now the OGRF's<sup>1</sup> main aim is to protect ammunition warehouses located on Transnistria's territory (the majority is in Cobasna), where, according to Russian data, approximately 19 tons of very old ammunition are stored. The OGRF consists of two battalions of mechanized forces (approximately 1 500 soldiers) and a battalion of Russian peacekeeping forces (around 400 soldiers). In 2015 alone, the OGRF conducted more than 1 000 small-scale exercises, 400 of which involved shooting drills, while 100 were training in counter-terrorism and the suppression of sabotage and intelligence groups. Soldiers also practiced defense against chemical and biological attack and establishing communication systems

Since 2014 Russian troops are no longer able to transit through Ukraine to Transnistria. Troop rotation takes place through the airport in Chisinau, which increases the Moldovan authorities' influence on the presence of Russian soldiers. Thus, in order to maintain staffing levels of military units, Russia recruits more and more Transnistrian citizens with Russian passports.

Before 2014 a number of agreements led Russian-**Ukrainian** military relations, among which: the Agreement of friendship, cooperation and partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine (1997); the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the government of Ukraine on military-technical cooperation (1993); the Agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation concerning the stationing of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine (1997, extended in 2010 till 2042); the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances (1994). After the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea and war in Donbass, Ukraine terminated the agreement on military-technical cooperation and the agreement with Russia on the transit of Russian troops to Transnistria. The procedure of abrogation of the Friendship Agreement has not been completed yet. As was said, Russian troops are no longer able to transit through the territory of Ukraine. The Agreement on the stationing of the Black Sea Fleet was abrogated by the Russian Parliament but not by its Ukrainian counterpart yet.

On the Crimean peninsula, Russia has increased the number of servicemen (24,000). Between 2014 and 2015, the Black Sea Fleet received eight new units (including *Kilo-class* submarines). Russia also strengthened coastal defences significantly, deploying the K-300 *Bastion* systems (NATO reporting name: SSC-5) and *Bal* systems (SSC-6 *Sennight*), equipped with P-800 Oniks (SS-N-26 *Strobile*) and Kh-35 (SS-N-25 *Switchblade*) subsonic anti-ship missiles. S-300 PMU (SA-20 *Gargoyle*) systems have also been deployed for air defence, as have Su-27 (Flanker) fighters, Tu-142 (Bear-F Mod 1) and Il-38 'Dolphin' (May) anti-submarine aircraft, as well as Ka-27 (Helix) and Ka-29 (Helix-B) helicopters. According to the Russian Military Doctrine, the possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons to defend Crimea is not excluded.

According to some estimates, about 7,000 Russian regular troops are currently in Donbass, and maybe 1 000 pieces of equipment (however, it is hard to tell since the equipment left there by the Ukrainian forces is similar to Russian equipment, for obvious reasons). There are uncontrolled movements of people and equipment between the two sides of the Ukraine-Russia border.

Russia recently announced the creation of three new divisions on its Western borders and of a number of brigades at the border with Belarus and Ukraine.

As concerns the numbers of Russian military presence in EaP countries, we, to summarize, have 600 in Belarus, around 1 900 in Moldova, 24 000 in Crimea and 7 000 in Donbass.

<sup>1</sup> OGRF stands for Operational Group of Russian Forces.

## 2 Powerpoint presentation by Ms Dyer

# Russian military presence in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

Anna Maria Dyer

Polish Institute of International Affairs

The history of Russia's military presence in the Eastern Partnership countries goes back to the time of Soviet Union, and is connected with the organisation of the former Soviet army and the system of defending Soviet space. This system was based on three circles.

The first, in which the best-equipped troops were at a permanent state of readiness, included satellite states of Soviet Union such as the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The second circle, in which units were not so well-equipped but were nevertheless at a very high level of combat readiness, included border Soviet republics such as the Baltic States, the Belarusian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR and Moldavian SSR.

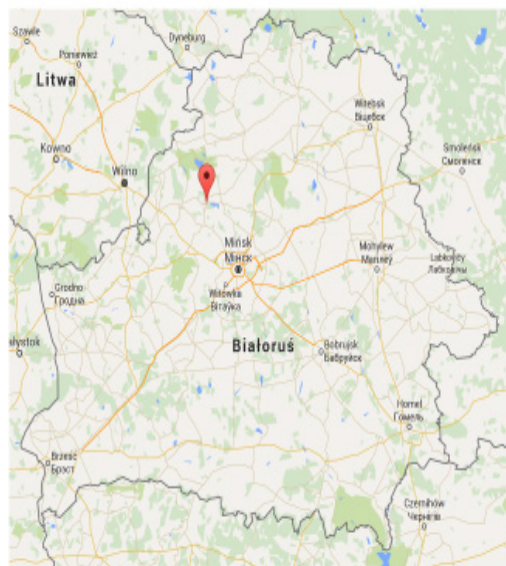
The third circle included the interior of the Soviet Union and was the worst equipped. After the collapse of Soviet Union, the Soviet army was withdrawn fully from former satellite states, and partly from previous Soviet republics such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

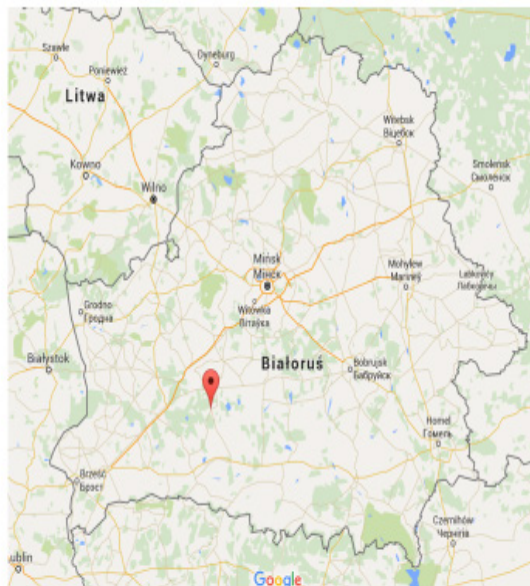
## Belarus

- ▶ Military cooperation between Russia and Belarus is regulated by many agreements. They include:
- ▶ The agreement between the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation on developing military-technical cooperation (2009)
- ▶ The agreement on the establishment of the Union State (1999)
- ▶ The agreement between the government of the Russian Federation and the government of the Republic of Belarus on an order for the construction, use and maintenance of the radiolocation station in Baranovich, which is located on the territory of the Republic of Belarus (1995)
- ▶ The agreement between the government of the Russian Federation and the government of the Republic of Belarus about the procedure of use and maintenance of the radio station in Vileyka, which is located on the territory of the Republic of Belarus (1995)
- ▶ The agreement between the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation on the joint air protection of the Union State's external border, and the creation of a joint regional air defence system by Belarus and the Russian Federation (2012)


The institutional framework for the alliance between the two countries is largely provided by the Russia-Belarus Union State and CSTO.

**There are two Russian military objects in Belarusian territory:**  
a radiolocation station in Hancevichi (outside Baranovichi), which faces west and monitors outer space as part of Russia's early warning detection system of incoming missile attacks,  
and a communications centre for nuclear submarines, located in Vileyka (in Minsk province). Both facilities are leased by Russia free of charge until 2020. At the same time, it has to be stressed that there are no regular Russian troops stationed on Belarusian territory



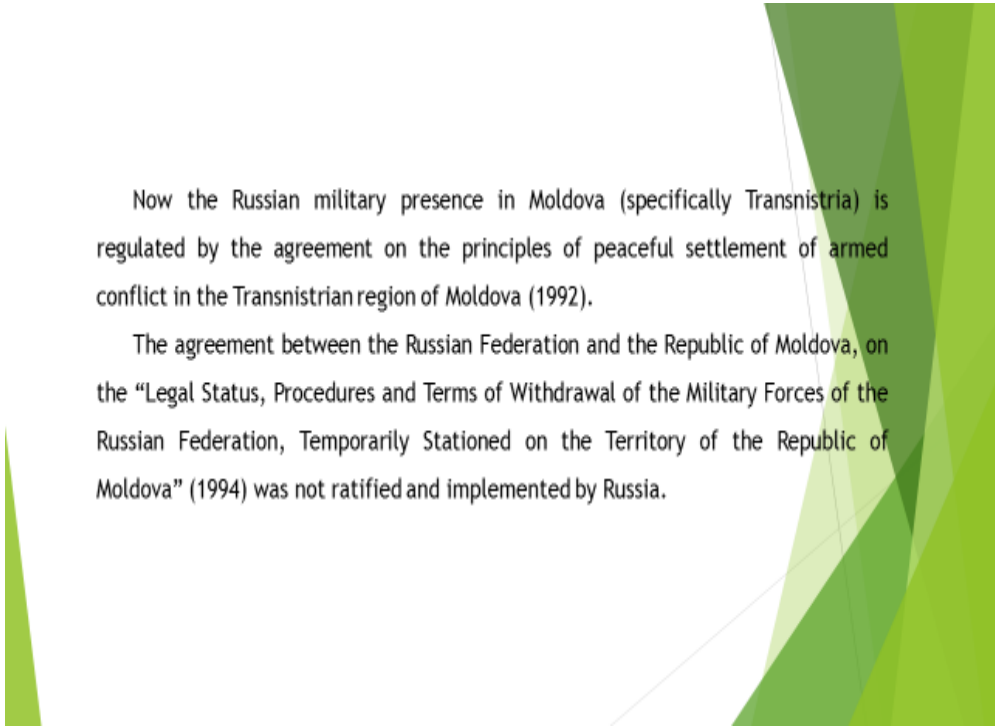


Joint Russian-Belarus exercises, whether *Zapad* or *Union Shield*, are almost an annual tradition. The most recent *Zapad* exercises took place from 20 to 26 September 2013. *Zapad 2013* was based on elements from Arab Spring events and assumed that external forces wanted to destabilise Belarus, but were opposed by the Belarusian army supported by the Russian air force, army and marines. During the manoeuvres, about 70 tanks (including 10 Russian), 60 aircraft and helicopters (40 Russian), multiple rocket launcher systems, 10 ships from Russia's Baltic Fleet and about 250 other pieces of military equipment were used.



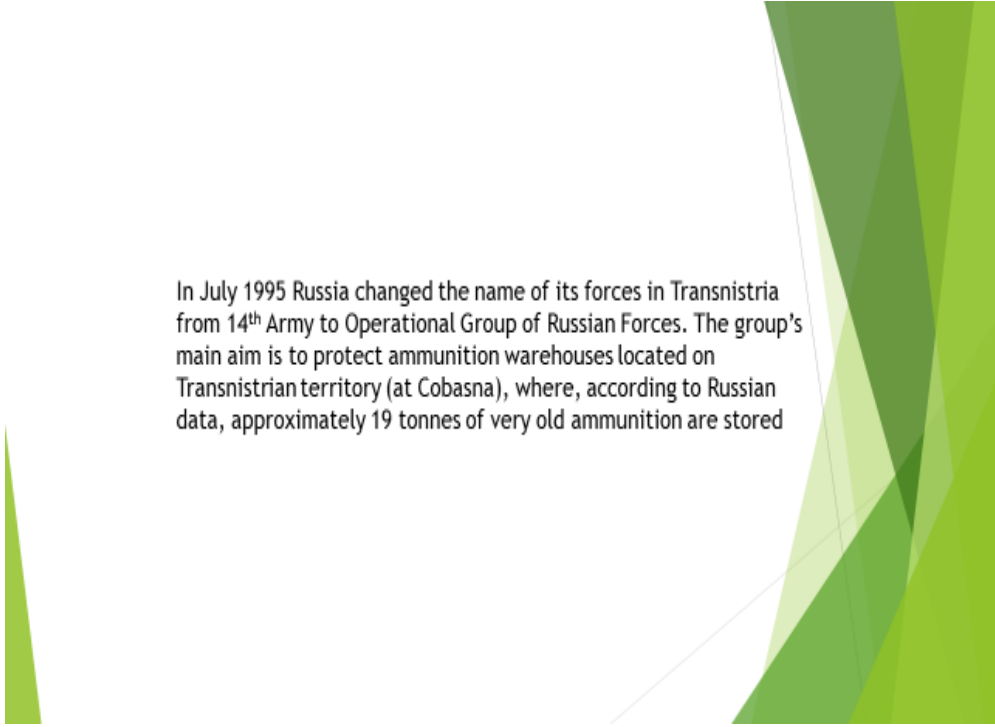
*Union Shield 2015* lasted from 10 to 16 September and included more than 6,700 soldiers from Russia and 1,300 from Belarus, as well as 400 pieces of military hardware including about 100 tanks and 80 combat planes and helicopters. Drills included anti-sabotage exercises and cooperation between air and naval units.

## Moldova

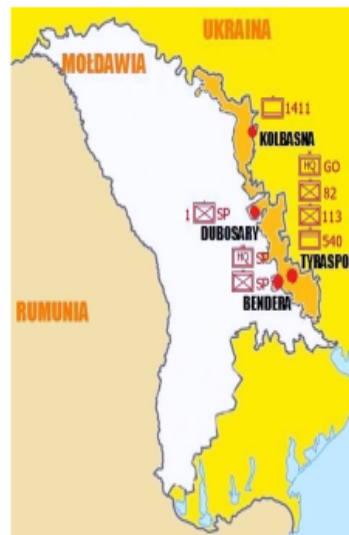


Now the Russian military presence in Moldova (specifically Transnistria) is regulated by the agreement on the principles of peaceful settlement of armed conflict in the Transnistrian region of Moldova (1992).

The agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Moldova, on the “Legal Status, Procedures and Terms of Withdrawal of the Military Forces of the Russian Federation, Temporarily Stationed on the Territory of the Republic of Moldova” (1994) was not ratified and implemented by Russia.



In July 1995 Russia changed the name of its forces in Transnistria from 14<sup>th</sup> Army to Operational Group of Russian Forces. The group’s main aim is to protect ammunition warehouses located on Transnistrian territory (at Cobasna), where, according to Russian data, approximately 19 tonnes of very old ammunition are stored




Source:  
<http://dziennikbrojny.pl/artykuly/art,2,6,6711,armie-swiata,potencjal,zgrupowanie-rosyjskich-wojsk-w-naddniestrzu>

The Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF), consisting of two battalions of mechanised forces (approx. 1,500 soldiers) and a battalion of Russian peacekeeping forces (402 soldiers) are currently based in Transnistria. The peacekeeping battalion is split between 15 points across the whole region.

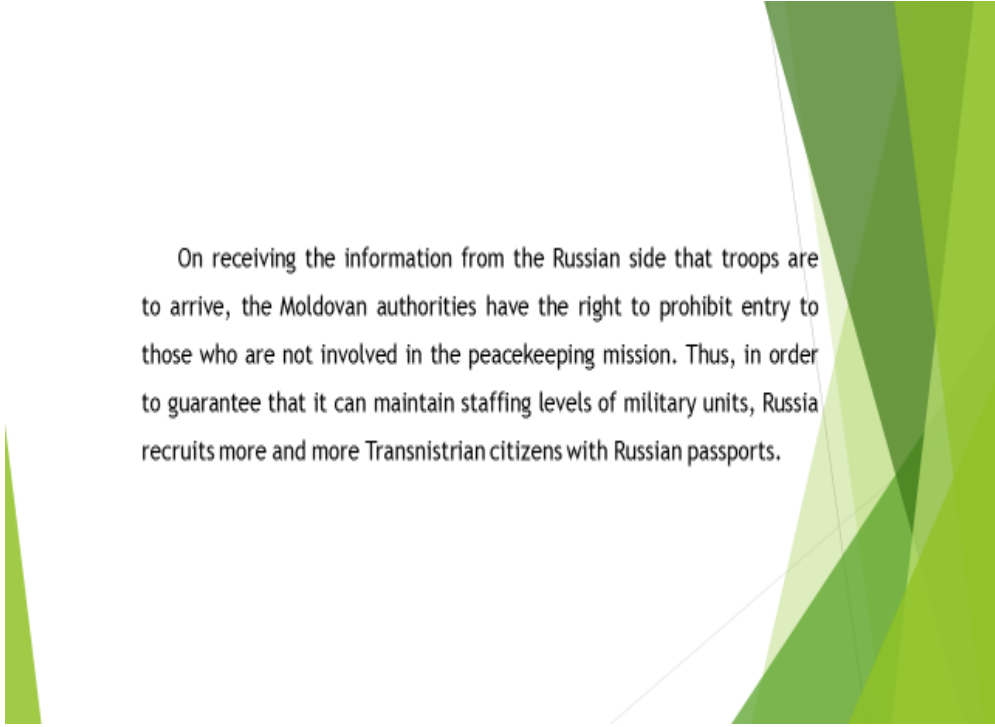
OGFR include:

- 82nd Guards Independent Motorized Rifle Battalion
- 113rd Guards Independent Motorized Rifle Battalion
- 540 th Security Battalion





In 2015 alone, the OGRF conducted more than 1,000 small-scale exercises, 400 of which involved shooting drill, while 100 were training in counter-terrorism and the suppression of sabotage and intelligence groups. Soldiers also practised defence against chemical and biological attack and establishing communications systems




On receiving the information from the Russian side that troops are to arrive, the Moldovan authorities have the right to prohibit entry to those who are not involved in the peacekeeping mission. Thus, in order to guarantee that it can maintain staffing levels of military units, Russia recruits more and more Transnistrian citizens with Russian passports.

## Ukraine

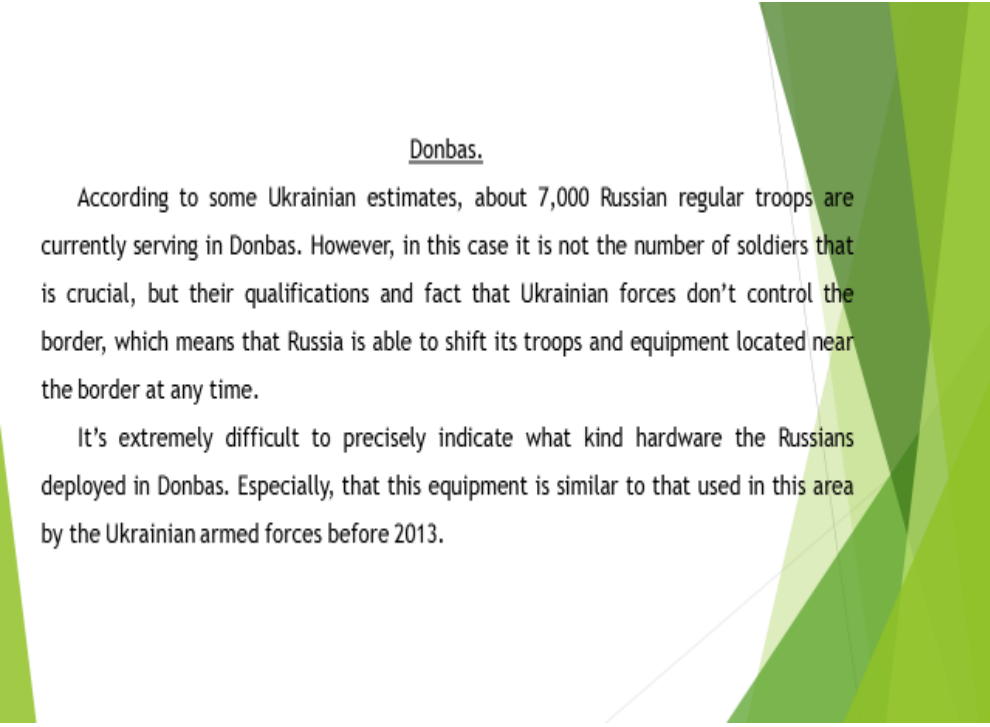
Before 2014, military cooperation between Russia and Ukraine was regulated by many agreements, including:

- The agreement of friendship, cooperation and partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine (1997)
- The agreement between the Russian Federation and the government of Ukraine on military-technical cooperation (1993)
- The agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation concerning the stationing of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine (1997, extended in 2010)



After the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea and war in Donbas, Ukraine terminated the agreement on military-technical cooperation and the agreement with Russia on the transit of Russian troops to Transnistria. It also announced that the friendship, cooperation and partnership agreement and the agreement concerning the stationing of the Black Sea Fleet on Ukrainian territory would be cancelled. At the same time, in 2014, the Duma (the lower chamber of the Russian parliament) also terminated the Black Sea Fleet agreement.

#### Donbas.



According to some Ukrainian estimates, about 7,000 Russian regular troops are currently serving in Donbas. However, in this case it is not the number of soldiers that is crucial, but their qualifications and fact that Ukrainian forces don't control the border, which means that Russia is able to shift its troops and equipment located near the border at any time.

It's extremely difficult to precisely indicate what kind hardware the Russians deployed in Donbas. Especially, that this equipment is similar to that used in this area by the Ukrainian armed forces before 2013.



## Crimea.

Since annexing Crimea, Russia has been expanding its military presence, which affects the balance of power in the Black Sea basin.

Between 2014 and 2015 the Black Sea Fleet received eight new units (including *Kilo-class* submarines). Russia also strengthened coastal defences significantly, deploying the K-300 *Bastion* systems (NATO reporting name: SSC-5) and *Bal* systems (SSC-6 *Sennight*), equipped with P-800 *Oniks* (SS-N-26 *Strobile*) and Kh-35 (SS-N-25 *Switchblade*) subsonic anti-ship missiles. S-300 PMU (SA-20 *Gargoyle*) systems have also been deployed for air defence, as have Su-27 (Flanker) fighters, Tu-22M3 (Backfire) long-range bombers, Tu-142 (Bear-F Mod 1) and Il-38 "Dolphin" (May) anti-submarine aircraft, as well as Ka-27 (Helix) and Ka-29 (Helix-B) helicopters.

According to Ukrainian data, about 24,000 Russian soldiers are currently stationed in Crimea.

Country	Military Objects	Number of Troops
Belarus	Volga-type radar station near Hantsavichy and Baranovichi (operational since 2002). Naval communication centre near Vileyka.	Up to 600 personnel.
Moldova	Peacekeeping group in Transnistria, consisting of staff, separate manoeuvre brigades, an anti-aircraft missile regiment, an independent regiment, and an air group. Ammunition warehouses in Cobasna village.	Up to 1,500 personnel.
Ukraine (to 2013).	Base of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, with all necessary infrastructure.	Up to 24,000 personnel + 7,000 troops in Donbas.

## ANNEXES TO THE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

### Annex 1: Russian Military Objects in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

<b>Country</b>	<b>Military Objects</b>	<b>Number of Troops</b>
Belarus	Volga-type radar station near Hantsavichy and Baranovichi (operational since 2002). Naval communication centre near Vileyka.	Up to 600 personnel.
Moldova	Peacekeeping group in Transnistria, consisting of staff, separate manoeuvre brigades, an anti-aircraft missile regiment, an independent regiment, and an air group. Ammunition warehouses in Cobasna village.	Up to 1,500 personnel.
Ukraine (to 2013).	Base of the Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, with all necessary infrastructure.	Up to 24,000 personnel.

## Annex 2: Major agreements between Russia and Belarus regulating military cooperation

- Agreement between the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation on developing military-technical cooperation (2009)
- Agreement on the establishment of the Union State (1999)
- Agreement between the government of the Russian Federation and the government of the Republic of Belarus on an order for the construction, use and maintenance of the radiolocation station in Baranovichi, which is located on the territory of the Republic of Belarus (1995)
- Agreement between the government of the Russian Federation and the government of the Republic of Belarus about the procedure of use and maintenance of the radio station in Vileyka, which is located on the territory of the Republic of Belarus (1995)
- Agreement between the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation on the joint air protection of the external border of the Union State, and the creation of a joint regional air defence system by Belarus and the Russian Federation (2012).

## Annex 3: Latest Russia-Belarus major exercises

### *Zapad 2013*

The most recent *Zapad* exercises took place from 20 to 26 September 2013 on the Brest, Gozhsky and Obuz-Lesnovsky military ranges (Belarus) and the Khmelevka and Pravdinsky military ranges (Kaliningrad). During the manoeuvres, about 70 tanks (including 10 Russian), 60 aircraft and helicopters (40 Russian), multiple rocket launcher systems, 10 ships from Russia's Baltic Fleet and about 250 other pieces of military equipment were used.

### *Union Shield 2015*

The exercise lasted from 10 to 16 September and involved more than 6,700 soldiers from Russia and 1,300 from Belarus, as well as 400 pieces of military hardware including about 100 tanks and 80 combat planes and helicopters. Soldiers from both countries trained on proving grounds in Leningrad, Pskov and Kaliningrad oblasts, as well as on the Baltic Sea. Drills included anti-sabotage exercises and cooperation between air and naval units.



## PART II: CONTRIBUTION BY GAÏDZ MINASSIAN

### 1 Speech by Gaidz Minassian (South Caucasus)

We can draw **6 key lessons** from the Russian military presence in the South Caucasus.

**The first one is conjunctural.** Since the 2008 war between Russia and South Georgia we can notice a strong reinforcement of Russia's military presence in the region. Russia has followed a harmonization process and a policy aimed at making the various axes of its South Caucasus military policy more coherent. The military agreements signed, on the one hand, between Russia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and on the other hand Russia and Armenia, are almost identical in their contents. There is a strong possibility that this integration process will continue in years to come. The headquarters of all Russian military forces in Armenia and in the two territories of Georgia is based on Rostov on Don.

**The second key lesson is historical.** In its effort at shaping the South Caucasus, Russia is continuing its imperial and Soviet legacy, which consists in integrating this space through military methods (instrumentalization of the military factor). During the Tsars regime, conquest was essentially a long military affair before it became cultural. At the time of the Civil War (1917-1921), the Red Army had integrated the South Caucasian Republics by strength and fire. Even if President Vladimir Putin refuses to admit it, there is, in Moscow today, a strong willingness to reintegrate this space, through military tools, back into the Russian zone of influence; this is part of Russia's aspiration to see the advent of a multipolar world where Russia – with its zone of influence – is a pole of attraction. This plan has been designed to consolidate and implement its authority.

**The third key lesson, which springs from the second, is strategic.** This process of bringing back Russian regional influence is carried out in an ad hoc way on a tactical level depending on the specificity of its relationship with the three South Caucasus states. Indeed, Russia has not adopted the same 'procedure' with the three Republics and we can talk about a rule of 3 'C's'.

- Cooperation with Armenia. Yerevan is the only south Caucasian state which is a member of the CSTO. Moscow and Yerevan have parallel interests in the region in regard to their history and the Turkish threat in the region. Russia has always considered the border with Turkey to be a source of real danger, no matter the period (independently of Turkey's NATO membership). In order to protect Armenians, victims of a genocide denied by Turkey, Yerevan sees in this historical aspect a real threat to its integrity; moreover, in 1993, Turkey unilaterally closed its border with Yerevan in solidarity with Baku, defeated by the Armenians, during the Nagorno-Karabakh war (1991-1994).

- Confrontation with Georgia. Russia wants to break Tbilisi's ambitions to join NATO and pursue its 'westernization' policy. The Russians have used South Ossetia and Abkhazia as a means of putting pressure on the Georgians.

- Confusion with Azerbaijan. Russia does no longer have a military presence in Azerbaijan anymore since the closure of the Gabala radio station in 2009. Yet, bilateral relations are good, one could even say excellent, despite mutual suspicion (Russia sold weapons and military equipment to Azerbaijan for 4 to 5 \$bn in recent years). Baku fears the Russian-Armenian alliance and has long accused Russia of helping the Armenians during the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Baku perceives Moscow to be pro-Armenian when Russia is weak and pro-Azerbaijan when Russia feels strong. Moscow, for its part, is suspicious of Azerbaijan, who gives more importance to its relations with Turkey than to its relations with Russia. Moscow feels that Baku is pro-Russian when circumstances allow, but pro-Turkish when they do not...

**The fourth key lesson is military-technical.** Russian forces in this region have almost the same equipment in their different bases, including the occupation troops in Georgia and the troops deployed in Armenia on an internationally recognized legal basis. These are essentially army forces who have

access to a considerable number of tanks, which means that their use would be primarily local. There is also a willingness to reinforce the logistic requirements of the Russian military along the littoral of the Black Sea, with the presence of forces in Crimea, Russia and Abkhazia, which constitutes a kind of geographical continuity. This is something that must not be under-estimated.

The other military-technical aspect of Russia's interests is the supply chain. Currently, the 102nd Gyumri base is supplied by air via Iran – with very high costs for such limited use. In fact, Russia is trying to re-open the rail links between Abkhazia, Georgia and Armenia in order to supply men and equipment by land and thus greatly reduce costs. However, in order to implement this plan, Russian-Georgian relations would first need to be normalized.

**The fifth key lesson is global.** For Moscow, the world must be multipolar and Russia, with its zone of influence, should be one of the poles. In relation to this multipolar world, Armenia and Russia have negotiated the (difficult) creation of a joint air defense system, with the same objectives as Russia and Belarus in Europe, and also the Central Asian states with Russia in Central Asia – all this taking place in the CSTO framework. In fact, Russia wants to pursue a two-track approach: firstly, 3 regional agreements, secondly a harmonization and unification of the joint space with a view to creating a strategic center under the same security umbrella, primarily under Russian control.

In addition, the war in Syria also gives de facto a global dimension to the Russian presence in the South Caucasus. Even if the implications are not completely clear, the fact that Russian naval forces stationed in the Caspian Sea implemented missile strikes against jihadists and rebel forces in Syria shows that the south Caucasus strategic space is indirectly involved in the struggle against jihadist terrorism, even if the missiles bypassed the South Caucasus. Amongst the different Russian bases present in the South Caucasus, the Gyumri one would logically be the military base most concerned if they were to participate in the Syrian conflict due to its proximity with Turkey, the rival of Russia in Syria, and its air forces situated at the air base in Abovian, near Yerevan. In the hypothesis of Russia participating in a military expedition to Mosul in Iraq, the closest Russian base would not be Tartus, on the Syrian coast, but in fact Gyumri, located in Armenia.

**Finally, the last key lesson of the Russian military presence is local,** with 'frozen' conflicts which are no longer frozen. Considering the conflict with Georgia, Russia might have to use its forces in Abkhazian and South Ossetian crises against Tbilisi, in respect of the military agreements signed with these two 'provinces' recognized as independent states by Moscow.

In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the situation is quite different. The CSTO Charter with its article 4 on mutual assistance in case of external aggression can be applied only in the case of an attack against Armenia's territory, so this would exclude the « Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh ». As we have seen during the Four Day War (1st-5th April 2016), the points of conflict were situated in the East and the South of the line of contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan, and not as was recorded during the violation of cease-fire this spring on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. That means that Baku seems to have launched this operation, not Armenia, who is more interested in maintaining the status quo rather than in re-opening hostilities.

However, we must be aware of this institutional blockade, whereby Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh authorities have negotiated a military pact in case of aggression. That means the direct participation of Armenia in this conflict, and a risk of implication of CSTO, but also a recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence by Armenia.

## 2 Background information by Mr Minassian

### The Russian military presence in the South Caucasus

**Gaïdz Minassian**, Senior Lecturer (Sciences Po-Paris), Associate Fellow at the Foundation for Strategic Research (Paris)

Russia's military presence in the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) cannot be dissociated from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the redefinition of the influence of the Russian Federation over neighbouring states. Rooted in specific historical circumstances, the 'new' military presence that Russia has developed in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia since 1991 does not have the same status and strength as in the Soviet period. It has been determined by two key elements: first of all the national security policy of these three new independent countries; secondly, Russia's military strategy in the region.

#### 1991 – 2008 The 'three C', cooperation, confrontation, confusion

**Cooperation: Armenia and Russia** Since the early 1990s Russia has controlled three military bases in Armenia: Gyumri, next to the Turkish border (102<sup>nd</sup> base: tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, artillery pieces); Abovian, close to the capital, Yerevan (426<sup>th</sup> Air Base in Erebuni Airport: Mig-29, Sukhoi, helicopters Mi-24, Mi-8); a third base near the city of Meghri, very close to the Iranian border (200 Russian border guards).

Overall, around 5,000 Russian military personnel are deployed in Armenia. Russia owns 5 percent of defense companies in Armenia (the fourth in size after the three Slavic republics in the Soviet era).

On March 16, 1995 in Yerevan, the Treaty on the Russian military base on the territory of the Republic of Armenia was signed. The same year, the 102<sup>nd</sup> military base was formed on the basis of Russian troops stationed in Armenia (the treaty entered into force on August 29, 1997). Armenia gave Russia the land for free, so Moscow rents the base free of charge. The base is partially maintained at the expense of the Armenian state budget. The 102<sup>nd</sup> base is a constant combat readiness formation.

The land blockade of Armenia by Azerbaijan and NATO-member Turkey, as well as the Russian-Georgian tensions, considerably complicate logistics for the 102<sup>nd</sup> base. Currently the base is supplied mostly by Russian military transport aircraft via the Russia-Caspian Sea-Iran-Armenia air route. Considering the political-geographical isolation of the base, the extra-regional use of Russian forces currently stationed in Armenia does not seem highly probable.

Armenia was a signatory of the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty (May 1992), and has been a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) since its formal creation in 2002 (it is the only CSTO member from the South Caucasus). For Armenia, CSTO membership is supposed to meet the security needs connected to the Turkish and Azerbaijani threats. Armenia is at war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and has no relations with Turkey, which has closed its border with Yerevan since 1993 in solidarity with Baku.

**Confrontation: Georgia and Russia** In 2002, Georgia has declared its plan to become a member of NATO. This inevitably created strong tensions with Moscow, which has used the separatist issue (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) against Georgia's NATO ambitions. Following the Istanbul agreement (1999) and agreements between Georgia and Russia (2005), these two states nonetheless agreed to close the four Russian military bases inside Georgia (*see Appendix*).

The remaining Russian military presence was located in South Ossetia and Abkhazia:

- *South Ossetia*: joint peacekeeping forces consisting of 3 – Russian, Georgian, and Ossetian – battalions were placed in Ossetia (1993–2008)<sup>2</sup>;
- *Abkhazia*: on May 14, 1994, an Agreement on a ceasefire and separation of forces was signed in Moscow, according to which Georgian and Abkhazian forces were to be separated and a heavy military equipment-free zone was to be established between them, with the deployment of a UN monitoring mission and CIS peacekeeping forces being to the security zone. In reality the ‘CIS peacekeeping forces’ were staffed solely by Russian military personnel.

**Confusion: Azerbaijan and Russia** The bilateral relationship has been ambiguous since the collapse of the USSR. After the Nagorno-Karabakh war in 1991-1994, Baku accused Russia of helping Armenians. Baku defends a multi-dimensional diplomacy, trying to develop good relations with Russia (including arms sales) whilst developing strategies of cooperation with Western countries, Turkey and Iran – aspects of which Moscow does not see as serving its national interests. Despite this confusion Russia kept a military presence in Azerbaijan until 2009 by controlling the radar station in Gabala, with no less than 800-900 Russian soldiers. This ended in 2012 because the Russian and Azerbaijani governments were unable to agree upon the rental price. As a result, there is no Russian military presence in Azerbaijan. Russia was furious when Azerbaijan made a deal with the United States for two other radars station in Kizly, north-west of Baku and Astara, close to Iran.

## SINCE 2008

Since the 5-Day Russia-Georgia war, Russia has consolidated its military presence in the South Caucasus. The headquarters of all the Russian bases in the region are located in Rostov-on-Don (Russian Federation), and belong to the Southern Military District. In 2009-2010, Russia homogenized its military presence by signing military agreements with South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Armenia and modernizing the military equipment deployed on its bases there. By these agreements, all parties agreed to prolong Russia’s presence in Armenia and Georgia’s separatist territories (recognized as independent states by Moscow in August 2008) for a period of 44 years.

Russia is trying to improve the channels of communication between its bases. Until now, the 102<sup>nd</sup> military base in Armenia has been supplied by air traffic via Azerbaijan, which is unique given the unsettled status of the Karabakh conflict. But Moscow would cut costs and distances by reopening the railway line between Russia and Armenia via Abkhazia and Georgia.

Russia conducts joint military exercises with Armenia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia on a regular basis.

As viewed by the international community, the Russian bases do not have the same status. Western countries consider the Russian bases in South Ossetia and Abkhazia to be occupation troops. As concerns Armenia, the international community views the Russian military presence to be legal.

Armenia is the only CSTO member – South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not. Only the bases in Armenia participate to the CSTO rapid reaction forces.

### **South Ossetia: 4<sup>th</sup> Army (military unit 66431)**

As a result of the ongoing military reform in Russia, the 4<sup>th</sup> Guards Military Base was established on the basis of the 135<sup>th</sup> and 693<sup>rd</sup> regiments (February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009). On April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia signed an agreement on a Joint Russian Military Base on the territory of

<sup>2</sup> Agreement on Principles of Settlement of the Georgia-Ossetian Conflict signed in Sochi by the presidents of Georgia and Russia— Eduard Shevardnadze and Boris Yeltsin (June 24th, 1992). During the 5-day war in 2008, Russian armed forces, including the 135<sup>th</sup> and 693<sup>rd</sup> regiments of the 19<sup>th</sup> motor rifle division, then part of the 58<sup>th</sup> Russian army, entered South Ossetia.

South Ossetia (for 49 years with a possibility of automatic extension every 15 years). The treaty entered into force on November 7, 2011. According to paragraph 1 article 11 of the treaty the Russian base is considered to have a status of a diplomatic mission as described in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Most importantly, on March 18, 2015 a Treaty on Alliance and Integration was signed by Russia and South Ossetia with a purpose of 'forming a united defense and security space'. According to this treaty, the South Ossetian armed forces and security services are integrated into the relevant structures of the Russian military and security forces.

The units of the base are mostly located in Tskhinvali, Java. Several smaller detachments are based in other locations. The strength of the force is about 4,000 personnel. Colonel Mikhail Ivanovich Polishchuk has been the commanding officer of the base since October 2013.

The base receives its supplies and reinforcements mostly via the Transcaucasian Highway, which connects South and North Ossetias through the Roki Tunnel. The Ossetian Military Road, which reportedly fell under Russian and Ossetian control in 2009, could possibly be an alternative supply route though it is not currently in use. The base has an airfield located next to the village of Kurta (formerly populated by Georgians), nonetheless we were not able to find information from open sources about the permanent stationing of the Russian air force on that airfield.

Apparently the 4<sup>th</sup> base is supposed to be a constant combat readiness formation, but we were not able to find any reliable confirmation.

The Dzarcemi training ground is used for exercises. Up to 500-800 personnel and 100-200 units of military equipment can be involved in tactical drills; and up to 1,300–2,000 military personnel and 300–500 units of military equipment are deployed for field exercises. Up to 40 company and battalion level tactical drills are conducted annually. Training to fight in forests and covered mountainous terrains and to operate under the enemy's air force attacks is often mentioned in reports about the tactical drills and field exercises of the 4<sup>th</sup> military base. UAVs are widely used during the exercises ('Orlan', 'Zastava', 'Granit' and 'Leyer' models). Besides Dzarcemi, the Tsarskoye training ground in Northern Ossetia is being actively used, also during exercises conducted at the level of the Southern Military District. Armed forces of South Ossetia may also participate in exercises conducted by Russian forces. For example, in March 2016 a joint exercise of artillery units of the 4<sup>th</sup> base and South Ossetian armed forces was conducted in Tsarskoye.

Considering the geographical isolation of the base, the extra-regional use of the brigade's forces would require enormous efforts and expenses, and is therefore unlikely. However the possibility of using particular formations against the insurgents in Russia's regions adjacent to South Ossetia cannot be ruled out completely.

### **Abkhazia: 7<sup>th</sup> military base (military unit 09332)**

During the 2008 war, Russian army formations, particularly the 7<sup>th</sup> Guards Air Assault division (GAAD, Novorossiysk) and a battalion tactical group from the 31<sup>st</sup> Separate Guards Air Assault Brigade (Ulyanovsk), were actively involved in operations in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and in Western Georgia. These formations were brought to Abkhazia via air and sea routes. A battalion tactical group from the 247<sup>th</sup> air assault regiment of the 7<sup>th</sup> GAAD took part in the Battle of the Kodori Valley.

After the recognition of the independence of Abkhazia by Russia, the two countries signed a number of bilateral agreements (*see Appendix*), including the 2010 Agreement on a joint Russian base on the territory of the Republic of Abkhazia (signed in Moscow, it allows Russia to station this base for 49 years, with a possibility of automatic extension every 15 years). In January 2009 the Russian 131<sup>st</sup> separate motor rifle brigade was stationed in Abkhazia, and on February 1 of the same year was reorganized into the 7<sup>th</sup> Russian military base. An Agreement on the combined group of Russian and Abkhazian armed forces was signed on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015, which has not yet entered into force. According to it, the 7<sup>th</sup>

Russian base and 2 Abkhazian separate motor rifle battalions plus artillery, air force and Special Forces formations will form a combined group under unified military command.

The strength of the force on the 7<sup>th</sup> base is about 4,000 personnel. Major General Mikhail Yevgenyevich Kosobokov is the commanding general of the base. The 7<sup>th</sup> base, a permanent combat readiness formation, is connected with Russia via a railroad and European route E97. Maritime communications are open through the seaport of Sukhumi as well as through smaller ports of Ochamchira, Gagra and Novy Afon (New Athos). Air routes are available through the Bombora (Gudauta) and Sukhumi airports. Considering the geographical advantages of the location of the base, its units can be rapidly deployed to locations outside of Abkhazia. The opposite is also true: reinforcements from Russia can arrive at the base relatively promptly.

The personnel of the 7<sup>th</sup> Russian base exercises at three combined arms training grounds in Abkhazia: in Gudauta, in Nagvalou and Tsabal (Tsebelda). The Molkino training area in Krasnodar region, Russia, is also used. Depending on the type of the formation participating in exercises, 100-800 personnel and 20-100 units of military equipment can be involved in tactical drills; up to 800-2,000 military personnel and 100-150 units of military equipment can be involved in larger exercises. Up to 100 exercises and about 1,000 live fire trainings are conducted annually. The personnel of the base in Abkhazia is also being actively involved in exercises conducted by the Southern Military District (Russia). Different formations of the base regularly participate in 1-to-2-month long field trainings with other units of the Southern Military District.

Russian Border Guards are also deployed in Abkhazia (as of May 2012, the strength of the force was around 1,300 personnel).

## **Armenia**

On August 20, 2010 in Yerevan, the presidents of Armenia and Russia signed the so-called Protocol #5 on changes to the 1995 treaty. According to these changes, the Russian base was to protect not only the interests of Russia, but also the security of the Republic of Armenia. As part of the agreement, Russia was also required to provide Armenia with « modern and compatible » armaments. Furthermore, the protocol granted Russia the right to use the base for a 49-year period, which might be automatically prolonged for a 5-year period. The 2010 Agreement between Yerevan and Moscow indicates that Russia has to guarantee the security of all Armenians borders. This is in contrast to the treaty of 1995-1997, by which only the Armenian-Turkish border was under Russian control. The changes entered into force on July 6, 2011.

On October 18, 2013, the commander of the Russian 3624<sup>th</sup> air base (part of the 102<sup>nd</sup> base), located at the Erebuni military airport in Yerevan, Colonel Alexander Petrov, announced that the base would be reinforced by a helicopter squadron «in the next few months». Later the deputy minister of Defence of Armenia confirmed that Armenia would allocate additional space for the helicopters, fuel-storage, etc.

While visiting the Gyumri base in November 2014, Vladimir Putin announced: 'Russia will intensify its presence in South Caucasus'. This intensification has taken at least three forms: 1/ the Russia-Armenia Air Defense agreement in 2015, providing for the establishment of a common air defense system<sup>3</sup>; 2/ new supplies of arms to Armenia (anti-aircraft missile system S-300V, S-400, Iskander missiles, multi-purpose

<sup>3</sup> On December 23, 2015, an Agreement on the creation of combined regional air defense system in the Caucasian collective security region was signed in Moscow by the defense ministers of Armenia and Russia. The agreement stipulates that a united regional (Caucasian) air defense system will be created, whose joint operation will be coordinated by the Commander of Russia's Aerospace Defence Forces. Also, while, according to the document, the commander of Russia's Southern Military District carries out the overall command of the system, a separate air defense zone is created in Armenia, which is to be managed by the Commander of Armenia's Air Defense Forces. This agreement has not entered into force yet.

light tactical fighter MiG-29 of the fourth generation and one transport helicopter Mi-8); 3/ the development of the Joint Defense System with Armenia in order to keep Russia safe from the Islamic State.

Despite the intensification of the Russian-Armenian cooperation, neither Russia nor the CSTO have intervened in the crises between Armenians and Azerbaijanis over Nagorno-Karabakh. Since the degradation of the situation on the front line in spring 2016, Russian forces in Armenia have not received the green light to support the Armenian forces against Azerbaijan operations even when Azerbaijani troops struck an Armenian position on the Armenian border. Already in August 2014, as tensions rose again, Andrey Ruzinsky, the commander of the Gyumri base, declared that *'if Azerbaijan decides to restore jurisdiction over Nagorno-Karabakh by force the [Russian] military base may join in the armed conflict in accordance with the Russian Federation's obligations within the framework of the CSTO'*; Moscow ignored this declaration. Armenia is also concerned by the arms cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan over the past few years, and has repeatedly denounced the supplies of Russian weapons to Baku: in other words, Armenia has doubts about how reliable its alliance with Russia is.

Russia considers the border with Turkey as the most sensitive, it is focused on this potential threat – besides, without necessarily linking it to NATO. Armenia is far from being opposed to this risk assessment. As a result, any military exercise between the two countries target Turkey as an adversary. As tensions have been rising between Russia and Turkey, Armenia has stayed away from this confrontation, even when a Turkish helicopter came close to the Gyumri base (the aircraft was not shot down by the Armenians and the Russians).

The Russian bases in the South Caucasus do not participate in Russia's intervention in Syria against terrorism. The cruise missile strikes conducted by the Russian navy forces stationed in the Caspian Sea against jihadist positions in Syria took place close to the common security space with Armenia, though. Considering the political-geographical isolation of the Russian bases in Armenia, the extra-regional use of Russian forces currently stationed in Armenia does not seem highly probable. The other Russian bases in the South Caucasus are obviously focused on stakes connected to Russian-Georgian relations.

## PART III: DISCUSSION

**Mrs. Anna Elżbieta Fotyga** said she wished to react to G. Minassian's presentation. She stressed it was difficult, not as the president of the Security and Defense Sub-committee, but as an individual, a Polish citizen with her specific historical experience, to look at these countries which are sovereign entities and should not be a playing ground for Russia's strategic interests. On this subject we have a consensus both within this sub-committee and within the European Parliament. South Ossetia and Abkhazia are occupied territories, and Nagorny-Karabakh is not a Republic. As concerns the recent resumption of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan, one has to wonder – who benefits by these events? Only Russia. One of its interests resides in arms sales, but obviously there are others.

**Mr Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski** I would like to ask a question to each panelist. To Mrs. Dyer, we have to recognize that nobody was able to predict what happened in Crimea, there was no prospective projection on this annexation. So how far can we trust our current analyses? Can they spare us a risk of degradation of the situation on the field in Ukraine? As concerns hybrid threats, have we seen all of what could happen in the future? On Moldova there is a willingness on the EU's part to improve the situation there, but we have to face the fact that on a number of fronts it has deteriorated, a factor of which is the fact that Ukraine's situation is itself very difficult. In Georgia what are the options to stabilize the problematic regions? What can be the impact of this country's situation on the whole region?

To Mr. Minassian: there are 50,000 Russian servicemen in the South Caucasus. How can the Russians pay for all this personnel? Can there be an impact of the current economic crisis from this point of view?

**Mr. Tunne Kelam** On all these issues one has to rely on fundamentals. The presence of Russian troops in the region is a tradition. Remember Molotov-Ribbentrop, Finland, the Baltic States... After 1991 Russia tried to keep troops in the Baltic States, their withdrawal took three years. There is a traditional model of Russia expanding its influence through having troops on the spot. That means that the Ukrainian model is not new. This is not the only tool that Russia can use. It can provoke national and social conflicts, which will lead to the deployment of Russian 'peacekeepers'. That is a classic in Russian strategy – provoking conflict then imposing itself as part of the solution to the conflict.

All that is happening today could almost have been foreseen. After all, the doctrine of the compatriots abroad appeared as early as in the beginning of the 1990s. Sergey Karaganov developed the idea by then. It is possible that our inaction on all these issues have made things easier for Russia in Ukraine and in Crimea.

**M. Jaromir Stetina** Thank you for these presentations. I would like to react to what Mr. Kelam said. Is not it normal, in a sense, that there are Russian soldiers abroad? We have been seeing them everywhere from Finland to Abkhazia and Afghanistan for one hundred years. Is it normal? It is Russian imperialism.

I would also like to ask a question to Mrs. Dyer, who mentioned the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons, could you please elaborate on that? Through the Budapest convention of 1994 Ukraine reneged on having nuclear weapons, which was a historical mistake. Are there nuclear weapons in Donbass? In Crimea? One can have legitimate questions on this. As a Czech, I recall that we were told that the Soviet army did not have nuclear weapons on our territory, and later on we learnt that it was a lie.

As concerns Nagorny-Karabakh: this has been going on for 25 years. Nagorny-Karabakh has become a real entity, with a parliamentary system which is functional; their economy functions better than Armenia's, and their army has already won two great victories (in the early 1990s, in the recent '4-day war'). So we have a state that is prepared – is not time ripe for us to recognize it?

**Anna Maria Dyer** As concerns Crimea there are probably a number of factors that have not been taken into account seriously enough. For example, there have been significant propaganda campaigns



orchestrated by Russia. For example, in 2012, almost all small buses were carrying the ribbons of Saint George and plenty of people whom I had an opportunity to talk to stressed that 'Russia left them'. As for the military operation in Crimea in March 2014, Russia has been able to use the agreement on the Black Sea Fleet to transfer servicemen to the peninsula. Moreover, Russia used the Ukrainian law that prohibits soldiers to use weapons outside of places designated for this. In general, there was a lack of information. Does the lack of strategic vision represent a threat? The Polish perspective on that is often criticized but the fact is that Russia is getting stronger and stronger, and that despite the economic crisis, its defense budget has kept growing. Its military reform is bearing fruits, and the defense budget is the last to be cut. Defense Minister Shoigu does all he can to preserve it. In addition, as viewed from the Russian government, investing in weapons is a way to make the economy work. As concerns hybrid threats, first there are purely military elements in these. For example internal movements of troops inside Russia. Then you have the propaganda war, the use of social networks. Another element is that Russia will do all it can to divide us (the EU), use blackmail in relations with some European states... In Transnistria, after the elections and the return to the old Constitution, we can observe increasing political and social tensions in the population, and rising poverty. Russia could play on this. The question is where Moldova is going to turn to? To the EU or to Russia? One should introduce a nuance however – Russia is living through an economic crisis, and probably cannot 'feed' Transnistria as much as in the past.

As concerns Russia's presence in the EU's eastern neighborhood, the question is: is this an accepted reality outside Russia? It seems that yes, it has been accepted as a sign of Russia's power ambition. But in this scheme what about the others' sovereignty? That is why they fought or are still fighting not to have Russian troops on their territory. And it is not only about troops. In the separatist territories of Georgia, as Tbilisi has refused to deliver passports, 95 percent of the inhabitants of these regions have Russian passports now. We have the same phenomenon in Crimea – so should we exclude that Russia could do the same elsewhere, for example in the Baltic States. As concerns nuclear weapons in Crimea or in Donbass, there is no such presence there according to open sources. But nobody can be 100 percent sure of anything. Nuclear weapons would not necessarily be considered useful in low-intensity conflicts. However, Russian officials have mentioned the possibility to deploy dual-capable systems in Crimea (Tu-22M3, Iskander), and some of the new platforms deployed there are supposed to be equipped with Kalibr missiles, which are also dual-capable. The political impact of this is real, including on NATO.

**Gaidz Minassian** Of course a situation of 'no war, no peace' benefits Russia. And of course, it grants itself a privileged *droit de regard* over its neighbors as a tutelary power. Russia's presence in the Caucasus has come after four centuries of expansion. You cannot suppress that in 25 years, although everyone of course would like these countries to be able to choose their own destiny. But there are systemic rules. Russia has not understood that globalization does not recognize zones of influence; we will have to see whether it clings to that or shows an ability to evolve on this subject. As for what sparked the '4-day war' in the South Caucasus, Armenia had no interest in doing that. In general, the side which suffers the greatest number of victims is the side which started the hostilities. Armenia suffered 100 losses, Azerbaijan – 400 (according to Russian, Western and Azerbaijani opposition sources of information). There was no concentration of troops on the Armenian side. Maybe it would be good to launch an inquiry (under the auspices of the Minsk group?, of the EU?, of the European Parliament?). 50,000 soldiers in the South Caucasus is far from the right figure, the Russian military presence is much less important. The Ministry of Defense pays for them, Russia has enough financial reserves to prioritize defense, which it does, so... As concerns Nagorny-Karabakh I have no legitimacy to decide whether it should be granted independence or not. It is up to the international community to decide what could guarantee peace best. One thing is sure: their absence at the negotiating table is weird. Another thing is sure: the more the international community will put pressure on the sides to this conflict, the more top world leaders will make declarations on this issue, and the more peace will have a chance to prevail. Regulation processes must be established – the Minsk Process is ok, but it is weak. It is positive that many top international

officials expressed a strong position when the 4-day war erupted, and that they have put pressure on the three sides. But we are really far from the moment when they will choose peace. Note that Nagorny-Karabakh has been recognized by a number of US federated states. An in France, in Europe, you have regions that think about it. On Ukraine, Moldova, the South Caucasus, everyone has been wrong. Ukrainian leaders have been able of only one thing – to make their country a geopolitical stake; by constantly oscillating between a pro-Russian or a pro-Western orientation, they have geopoliticized their own state instead of building it up. Russia has no allies, only vassals; Russia can only power, does not know how to play a different game. And the West wants to spread its values but when states want to adopt these values, like Ukraine or Georgia, we turn our back on them. In addition, we cannot guarantee their security as there is no such thing as a European army. So here we have collective responsibility, and we will have to take it into account when rebuilding the international system. In this region, the enemy is nationalism and rejection of the other, this is the main challenge.

**Jaromir Stetina** I totally agree with Mr. Minassian. It is necessary to act on Nagorny-Karabakh. I was there during the 4-day war, I visited their Parliament. Why would not they have their representatives in the European Parliament? They are ready for it, we should think about it.

**Anna Elżbieta Fotyga** It is now time to close this discussion. Thank you for these extremely interesting presentations.

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