

DESCnet

Jean Monnet Network DESCnet
Developing European Studies in the Caucasus
Newsletter 2/2017

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1 – Editorial

Dear colleagues and friends!

Greetings and a warm welcome to the 6th issue of our DESCnet newsletter!

Our project is almost two years old and we have accomplished much throughout this period. We have already had two winter schools in Stavropol and Pyatigorsk, a summer school in Batumi and a young researchers' seminar in Graz. Our consortium is very proud about the establishment of the Association of European Studies for the Caucasus (AESC) and our first-ever AESC Convention which took place at Yeditepe University in April 2017. The Convention which tackled issue of Europeanisation, more precisely "Challenges and Opportunities of Europeanisation in the Caucasus", gathered AESC members, DESCnet network representatives, experts and scholars for a lively debate, exchange of ideas and discussions.

Now it is the turn of Yerevan State University to organise a challenging and at the same time stimulating summer school in Yerevan for July 14-24. Our team at the Centre for European Studies of Yerevan State University is getting ready for this second DESCnet Summer School. This is first international summer school organised by the Centre for European Studies, and the entire administrative and academic staff is working hard to accomplish this endeavour having in mind DESCnet priorities and objectives as well as the experience from already accomplished schools.

In brief, the Summer School on European Integration and Energy Security will offer a critical analysis of existing foreign and regional security policies by focusing on EU's energy policies and problems of energy security in conflict-stricken regions, and it will review challenges and possible developments in relation to the changing geo-political situation. The region of the South Caucasus is rather complicated, not only because of its terrain, but also because of its geo-political environment which includes closed borders, 'frozen' conflicts and a difficult political and economic situation and conflicting interests of major players in the region.

Energy security is a vital issue for such land-locked countries as Armenia, which has two closed borders, conflict in Nagorno Karabakh and no natural gas or oil resources. Armenia strove for European integration when in 2009 it became part of the Eastern partnership (EaP). The EaP aimed at accelerating political association and further economic integration between the EU and interested partner countries.

The EaP initiative is based on a commitment to the principles of international law and fundamental values - democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. It also encompasses support for a market economy, sustainable development and good governance.¹ In 2015, the EU successfully signed Association Agreements with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, which today effectively transpose an important part of reforms and move the countries towards a European value system. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus are left behind in this development. Despite the fact that the EU is the main trading partner for Armenia, our country which also negotiated an Association Agreement including a free-trade deal, in 2013 made a U-turn choosing the Eurasian Economic Union proposed by Russia over EU association due to various reasons (security, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, gas and electricity, etc.). Despite its decision not to sign the EU Association Agreement, our country found ways to start a new dialogue with the EU. As a result, the EU launched a new round of negotiations with Armenia in December 2015 on a new legally binding agreement "EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement" which was initialled in March 2017. I hope that this new agreement will pave the way for political reforms, enforcement of democratic institutions, greater mobility with the EU, and open up new possibilities for research and education in the frameworks of Horizon and Erasmus+.

The DESCnet project is one those projects, as it helps to improve European studies teaching in the South Caucasus through interactive and interdisciplinary methods. We are very thankful to our colleagues from University of Tartu, University of Graz and Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University who will join our university team this summer to unite our efforts in enhancing European Studies teaching in Armenia.

Yours sincerely,



*Vladimir Martirosyan, PhD in Political Science
Associate Professor, Faculty of International Relations,
Deputy Director, Centre for European Studies,
Yerevan State University*

¹ See <<https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters->

2 – Upcoming DESCnet events

Summer School „European Economic Integration and Energy Security“ Yerevan (Armenia) 14 – 24 July 2017

DESCnet will hold its fourth seasonal school on the topic „European Integration and Energy Security“ (6 ECTS) in Armenia organised by the Centre for European Studies of Yerevan State University. The School will serve as a platform to discuss and elaborate on current challenges in the areas of European integration and energy security, which the region faces. The summer school is open to undergraduate and graduate students from the region and beyond who are interested in international relations, European integration, political science, and energy security. The language of instruction is English.

The main aim of the school is to debate over energy security policies within the EU's Foreign and Security policy framework and to examine existing challenges and alternatives in the Caucasus with a view to existing conflicts, closed borders, as well as issues of economic development.

The school programme will offer a critical analysis of existing foreign and security policy, European integration policies in the region as well as energy security in the Caucasus region. Designed as a student-oriented school, it implies active involvement of participants. Apart from individual and group work, school participants will have a mixture of issue-related lectures, workshops and debates that will be offered by an international team of lecturers from Yerevan State University, Tartu, Graz, and other DESCnet partner universities. To obtain required credits, students will be obliged to participate in seminars, group and project works.

The candidates selected for this School will hail from Armenia, Georgia, Italy, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States.

Topics to be covered:

- Introduction to European integration
- European integration, economic integration and energy policies
- Basics of EU's Foreign and Security policy: regional implications
- Energy security on EU's EFSP agenda
- Energy, Biopolitics and Governmentality: Regional implications
- Europeanisation of Eastern European Countries: Theoretical and Empirical Approaches
- Justice: What is the Right Thing to Do in Relation to EU Integration?

Teaching Staff

- Ass. Prof. Dr. Narek Galstyan, PhD in Political Science, Faculty of International Relations, Yerevan State University, Armenia
- Dr. Aram Terzian, PhD in Political Science, Centre for European Studies, Yerevan State University, Armenia
- Dr. Benedikt Harzl, MA, Russian Eastern European & Eurasian Studies Centre, Faculty of Law, University of Graz, Austria
- Dr. Erhard Busek, formerly Vice-Chancellor of the Republic of Austria
- Prof. Dr. Hubert Isak, Department of European Law, University of Graz, Austria
- Dr. Aiste Mickonyte, BA, LL.M., Russian Eastern European & Eurasian Studies Centre, Faculty of Law, University of Graz, Austria
- Prof. Andrey Makarychev, Visiting Professor, Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia
- Dr. Gvantsa Davitashvili, LL.M., Lecturer, Caucasus School of Law
- Ms Arevik Anapiosyan, PhD Student, Centre for European Studies, Yerevan State University
- Ms Armine Khachatryan, LL.M., Centre for European Studies, Yerevan State University

3 — Disseminating DESCnet

First Annual Convention of the Association of European Studies for the Caucasus (AESC)

„Challenges and Opportunities for Europeanisation in the Caucasus“

Yeditepe University (Istanbul, Turkey), 27-28 April 2017

The AESC held its First Annual Convention on 27-28 April 2017 in Istanbul. It featured two academic workshops and a large variety of exchanges both among speakers and a great number of students from Yeditepe University and other Turkish universities who took an active part in the event.

Following the official opening by by Almula Türedi from the Ministry of EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, the first workshop took off with the topic **“The Changing Regional Geographies in Europe and its Eastern Neighbours”**. It started with presentations by Mukhtar Hajizada (Khazar University, Baku) and Itir Toksöz Bullens who provided different perspectives on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Armağan Gözkaman (Beykent University, Istanbul) followed with a talk on **“Turkey and the Union for the Mediterranean”**.

In the afternoon papers were devoted to **“Turkey's Black Sea Policy and the EU (Filiz Tutku Aydin of Social Sciences University of Ankara), “People or Territories: The Geo-/ Biopolitical Dilemmas for Georgia and Ukraine (Andrey Makarychev of the University of Tartu) and “Tatarstan: A Meeting Point of Russian and Turkic Worlds” by Aleksandra Yatsyk (Institute of Human Sciences, Vienna).**

On the second day, the Convention continued with a workshop on the topic **“Foreign and Security Policy Implications of Europeanisation in the Caucasus”**. Seyit Ali Avcu (Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University) gave a presentation on **“Securitization of Economic Integration Decisions: Armenia and the Eurasian Economic Union”**, Gvantsa Davitashvili (Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University) presented on **“Europeanisation of Georgia: Security Concerns”**. In the second set of speakers, Damla Cihangir (Sabanci University) presented her talk on the topic

“The ENI in the Caucasus and Co-operation Opportunities with Turkey” and Seda Hanegelioglu (Yeditepe University, Istanbul) concluded **“With Turkey against Russia? European Common Energy Policy”**.

The final speaker of the Convention was the AESC Managing Board Member and Jean Monnet Professor of European Studies Oliver Reisner of Ilia State University. His talk was entitled **“The Parliamentary Election in Georgia 2016: A Policy Analysis Perspective”** and gave a keen analysis of some of the paradoxes of election campaigning in Georgia.

The hallmark of the event: Bringing the students in

The principal distinguishing feature of the Convention was the inclusion of the students into the entire effort. The extension of AESC membership to undergraduate students who declare an interest in Europeanisation in the Caucasus through a decision taken during the General Assembly meeting is a strong indicator of the eagerness of the scholars involved to motivate the younger generations. The election of Betül Soysal, a double major student in the Faculty of Law and the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Yeditepe University who has assumed utmost responsibility in representing the AESC on campus, as a member of the AESC Executive Board can be considered a pre-eminent step in that direction. A substantial number of students indeed joined the AESC as members during the Convention.

Taking the students on board through inviting their input and participation can hence be regarded as the most prominent accomplishment of the First Annual Convention. Professors Thomas Krueßmann, Oliver Reisner, and Mukhtar Hajizada merit particular appreciation for spending every minute of their time on the campus with the students, boosting their confidence and stimulating their intellectual curiosity. After the final panel, the students were encouraged by the AESC Executive Board members to express their expectations of the AESC.



3 — Disseminating DESCnet (cont.)

The idea of networking among students via DESCnet was voiced on repeated occasions during the Advisory Board and the General Assembly meetings. As proof of the commitment, the trust placed on the young scholars by the AESC Executive Board and the Dean's Office in the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at Yeditepe University paid off immensely, no matter how unconventional it sounded to rely on undergraduate students to organise a scholarly event made up of various panels and workshops. Emre Güpgüpoğlu and his team almost exclusively planned the whole event and surmounted challenges arising during the Convention.

A scholarly get-together

The First Annual Convention served above all the purpose of making the topic of Europeanisation in the Caucasus intelligible for a wider audience with diverse research interests. Case studies and comparative analyses were resorted to with a view to exploring the dynamics underlying the changes in the region. Another major consequence of the Convention was familiarising the Turkish academia with the DESCnet Project and the AESC. Bringing scholars from İstanbul and Ankara together with scholars who accumulated expertise on other corners of the region is likely to ensure sustained awareness and interest on the part of Turkish colleagues. A renewed commitment to giving a boost to publications was on the agenda throughout the event. In the context of the search for a strategy,

the pros and the cons of publishing in academic journals and working paper series were scrutinized. A frank debate ensued as to how young researchers might be encouraged to share their findings and publish their work. With regards to improving the overall quality of teaching, heated debates were made through the exploration of innovative tools. The young researchers' seminar was highlighted, with an emphasis on the prime goal of training young scholars and then in turn creating opportunities for them to teach.

Planning the calendar for 2017 - 2018

The pledge to carrying on and deepening the collaboration between the partners was reflected in drafting the calendar for future activities. The date and the central theme of the Second Annual Convention were negotiated. Kristine Gevorgyan shared the specifics of the 2017 Yerevan Summer School that appeared to be a very thoroughly planned effort. The 2018 Summer School was also on the agenda, with a multiplicity of opinions on how to develop it further. Among others, the option of organising another seasonal school potentially scheduled for September 2017 was put forward. In a marked display of the willingness of the partners to ensure the sustainability of the project, a timetable for grant applications and future funding possibilities was proposed.

Gratitude for making the event possible and sincere appreciation for supporting the event goes to:

- the Rectorate at Yeditepe University for the immense support extended ahead of and during the whole event,
- Professor Haluk Kabaalioğlu for having worked over the years to ensure the participation of Yeditepe University in the DESCnet project and his continuing encouragement,
- Professor Dursun Arikboğa for the advice, guidance, strong support, and for having placed confidence in the Department of Political Science and International Relations and the International Relations Students' Club,
- Professor Thomas Kruessmann for always providing insight and displaying patience in the run-up to the event,
- Assistant Professor Bilgen Sütçüoğlu for continuously guiding the organising committee with suggestions,
- Assistant Professor Orçun Türegün for always being there to eliminate any predicaments that surfaced prior to the event,
- Emre Güpgüpoğlu for personally attending to every single detail relating to the event and his dedication, professionalism and resourcefulness,
- Nuran Öksüz for the team spirit she displayed throughout the event and her unwavering attention,
- the Executive Board members of the International Relations Students' Club - Betül Soysal, Pelin Pamukçu, Emirhan Duran, Beste Akman, Buse Nas Özdemir, Pınar Aydın - for their commitment and resolve,
- Almula Türedi from the Ministry for EU Affairs of the Republic of Turkey - Directorate for Accession Policy for addressing the participants during the opening ceremony and her continuous encouragement of students,
- Andrey Makarychev, İtir Toksöz Bullens, Armağan Gözkaman, Mukhtar Hajizada, Filiz Tutku Aydın, Aleksandra Yatsyk, Kristine Gevorgyan, Seyit Ali Avcu, Gvantsa Davitashvili, Tamta Tsotskhalashvili, and Seda Hanegelioğlu for sharing their expertise and initiating vivid discussions,
- Assistant Professor Selin Türkeş Kılıç for having accepted to take part as a moderator and discussant, in addition to bringing her expertise in,
- Professor Jale Civelek, Assistant Professors Gizem Çakmak, Aylin Aydın Çakır, Deniz Kozanoğlu and Dr. Bülent Şenses for joining the workshops and panels

4 — Related upcoming events

Jean Monnet Summer Module “The EU and Security in the Wider Neighbourhood” Kadir Has University, Istanbul (Turkey), 3 – 14 July 2017

The summer module on “The EU and Security in the Wider Neighbourhood” focuses on the EU as an international security actor in its Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods, which share unstable settings challenged by various political, societal and economic issues.

The first part of the module is designed to equip the students with an introductory understanding of the external competences of the EU from a historical, institutional, conceptual and thematic perspective as well as a thorough grasp of the European Neighbourhood Policy with a specific focus on its modalities in both regions. The students will then be divided into two groups of regional tracks, first focusing on the Euro-East, second on the Euro-South; in order to understand the opportunities and challenges for the EU in dealing with security issues in its wider neighbourhood through a more specialised approach.

The objective of the course is to provide students with the analytical tools to understand the special nature of the EU’s approach towards the security issues in its wider neighbourhood. The course’s main aim is to provide students with a strong understanding of the main political motivations as well as the track record of the EU in dealing with security around its neighbourhood.

By the end of the course students will demonstrate a thorough grasp of the literature on the ENP, understand the conceptual and empirical aspects of the study of the EU’s security policies towards the wider neighbourhood, acquire a good understanding and a comparative perspective on the modalities of the two-region aspect of the neighbourhood policies, apply their knowledge of the tools of policy analysis to empirical cases of EU neighbourhood relations. Students fulfilling the module requirements will be awarded with a KHAS certificate of 5 ECTS credits.

To apply, please fill in the application form available at www.eujmm.khas.edu.tr until 15 June 2017. Any inquiries should be addressed to eujmm@khas.edu.tr.

IBA Europe-Caucasus-Asia Forum 2017 London (United Kingdom), 6 – 8 September 2017

The IBA Europe-Caucasus-Asia (ECA) Forum (former CIS Local Counsel) has become a linchpin between Asia and Europe. The ECA Forum has introduced lawyers from around the world to the post-Soviet region for over a decade, offering its delegates fantastic cultural programmes with numerous networking events every year. Following outbound investments from evolving countries, the ECA Forum is moving to London in 2017. Topics include:

- Planning and resolving construction disputes in the ECA region;
- Business going online – new possibilities for e-commerce projects;
- The role of the legal profession in building a corruption-free environment;
- Law firm management: How to feel ‘at home’ on the global stage;
- Sector group management, practices and administrative challenges;
- Tackling intercultural challenges...talking the talk.

The full programme is available at <https://www.ibanet.org/Conferences/conf817.aspx>

Armenia Model European Union 2017 Yerevan (Armenia), 21-24 September 2017

The 7th edition of AMEU2017 has launched its call for participation. It addresses creative young enthusiasts who are passionate about politics, debates and are eager to contribute their time to something as meaningful and impact-full as the Armenia Model European Union Conference 2017. AMEU2017 promises to be one of the biggest and academically challenging conferences of 2017 convened in Armenia.

This year’s edition AMEU conference will be solely dedicated to EU-Russia relations: after the Russian military intervention in Ukraine in February 2014, a number of governments, including countries from EU introduced restrictive measures against businesses and companies from the Russian Federation. The working language of the conference is English. The participation fee is 7000 AMD. The deadline for applications is July 20, 2017, by 23:59 CET.

4 — Related upcoming events (cont.)

11th Annual Baku Summer Energy School ADA University, Baku (Azerbaijan) 9 – 21 July 2017

The Baku Summer Energy School (BSES) is an annual two-week certificate programme of the Caspian Center for Energy and Environment (CCEE) of ADA University, held in July in partnership with the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), British Petroleum in Azerbaijan and ExxonMobil. It brings together world-renowned scholars, academics and policy makers to examine and gain a better understanding of global energy and environment issues and their practical application.

BSES covers a wide range of issues:

- Fundamentals of Energy
- Energy Law
- Energy Economics
- Geopolitics of Energy
- Environmental Issues
- Strategic Management

A special focus of the programme is on the Caspian Basin, including regional pipeline network development, geopolitics of the Caspian Sea and its legal status as well as the strategic outlook of SOCAR. The full

programme is available under the link below. Upon completion of the programme, participants will receive a certificate signed by the Rector of ADA University and the President of the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic.

The application deadline was 15 May 2017. For more information, please see http://ccee.ada.edu.az/education/non-degree_programs/baku_summer_energy_school_2017.htm

3rd EU Summer School ADA University, Baku (Azerbaijan) 17 – 28 July 2017

The annual EU Summer School (EUSS) at ADA University will be co-organised by Centre International de Formation Européenne (Nice University).

The programme will offer a broad overview of EU fundamentals and focus in-depth on EU economic and energy policies. Given that EUSS takes place in Azerbaijan, the topics of ENP and EU-Azerbaijan relations will be at heart of the programme. Special attention will also be given to the challenges that the EU faces today. Upon completion, participants will receive Certificates of Achievement from the Center of Excellence in EU Studies at ADA University and Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE).

EUSS is available for national and international applicants age 17 and above from all professional backgrounds. The tuition fee is 100 EURO and covers the cost of teaching materials, local

transportation, luncheons and coffee breaks during the programme. The tuition fee does not include visa and flight costs. For international applicants and national applicants living outside of Baku region, accommodation will be provided on behalf of ADA University. The deadline for applications was 17 May 2017.

For any further inquiries, please contact ceeus@ada.edu.az



4 — Related upcoming events (cont.)

Summer School

"Imagining the Neighbourhood in Between. Russia, Europe, Memory and Security"
Collegium Civitas (Warsaw, Poland), 19 - 23 September 2017



The Summer School is part of the Jean Monnet Network NEMESIS, led by the Russian Southern Federal University with the Universities of Bremen, Amsterdam, Collegium Civitas in Warsaw and the University of Applied Sciences in Vienna. It will get students acquainted with developments in the Eastern Neighbourhood. Equally, it aims to furnish students with an understanding of such concepts as identity, memory and security and their relevance for the study of Europe-Russia relations and the Eastern Neighbourhood.

Sessions will include:

- Is the EU a peace project?
- European integration, European identity and the role of memory
- Imagined Europe(s): Sameness and othering in public media discourse
- Political risk in the Eastern Neighbourhood
- A fine old conflict: Slavophiles and Westernizers
- The state of the neighbourhood and the state of EU policies and their effects
- Security, memory, Eurasia and Russia
- Europe and Russia in the mirror of mutual apprehension.

Students successfully completing a written assessment (essay) will receive certification of 4 ECTS. There is no fee, though students are expected to cover their own travel / accommodation costs. For more information, please contact Ms. K. Blaszczyk at katarzyna.blaszczyk@civitas.edu.pl

Black Sea Summer University

"EU and the Black Sea Region: New Realities and a Changing Geopolitical Context"
Tbilisi (Georgia), 20 - 26 July 2017

The Black Sea Summer University will be organised by Centre International de Formation Européenne (Nice University) and the Georgian Institute of Politics. It will offer a high-profile study course for students of graduate programmes in political science, international relations and other relevant fields. Courses will include lectures, discussions, a study visit to the Information Center on NATO and EU, and a cultural programme for Georgian and international students. The Black Sea Summer University provides an opportunity for students to attend lectures conducted by renowned experts on Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region from a number of universities. Students will have the chance to learn more about the challenges that the shifting international context poses for the region.

The topics include:

- The Wider Black Sea Region in the Global Context
- The European Union and Geopolitics of the Black Sea
- The Challenges for Eastern Partnership and European Integration
- Georgian Foreign Policy
- Foreign Policy in the Wider Black Sea Region

Eligible for participation are students currently enrolled in Bachelor's or Master's degree programmes in Political Science, International Relations and other relevant fields. There is the possibility of obtaining up to 4,5 ETCS credits. Georgian students were asked to submit by 15 June 2017 a motivation letter and cv in English to grigalashvili@gip.ge. International students please contact Ms. Marie-France Perdigon, Director of the Summer University Programme at direction.mfp@orange.fr. For additional information about the programme, please contact Ms. Mariam Grigalashvili at grigalashvili@gip.ge or Info@gip.ge.

5 — News and ongoing

New DESCnet publications survey

In the preceding issues of the DESCnet Newsletter, we introduced new publications from a variety of international journals topically related to the Caucasus and European Integration. The task is now to put this literature overview on a more systematic footing. Below you will find the journals, which have been hitherto evaluated. Please inform the Newsletter team (kruessmann.thomas@gmail.com) if there are any more journals that should be included in this list. Your suggestions are highly welcome!

Black Sea Security
Caucasus Analytical Digest
Caucasus International
Caucasus Survey
Central Asian Affairs
East European Politics
Eastern Journal of European Studies
European Politics and Society
Global Affairs
Journal of Balkan and New Eastern Studies
Journal of Borderland Studies
Journal of Caucasian Studies

Journal of Contemporary European Studies
Journal of European Integration
Journal of Slavic Military Studies
Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society
Nationalities Paper
Post-Soviet Affairs
Problems of Post-Communism
Romanian Journal of European Affairs
Russian Politics
Southeast European and Black Sea Studies
Journal
The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review

AESC Membership drive

Following its First Annual Convention held at Yeditepe, the Association of European Studies for the Caucasus is now engaging in a membership drive. The goal is to increase the number of members from among students and young researchers (M.A. students and above) to 100 by the end of 2017.

Please check out the AESC website:

<http://aesc-online.eu>

Information on membership available here

<http://aesc-online.eu/membership>



Join us also on Facebook in the group "Association of European Studies for the Caucasus"!



5 – News and ongoing (cont.)

Observatoire du Caucase closed...

Following the end of the Academic Swiss Caucasus Network (see Newsletter 1/2017), there is another loss of a scholarly institution to be deplored. In August 2016, the *Observatoire du Caucase*, also named Antenne de Bakou, was closed. The Observatoire was a subsidiary of the *Institut français d'études anatoliennes* (IFEA), a French research institute in social sciences and humanities created in Istanbul in 1930. Placed both under the scientific supervision of the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research) and under the patronage of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the IFEA still carries out research in Turkish studies. The Institute is organised in four departments: archaeology, Byzantine and Seljuk history, Ottoman and Turkish history, and contemporary studies.

The Observatoire du Caucase belonged to the Department of Contemporary Studies. It was originally established in 2002 in order to give a more precise insight into both the Northern Caucasus (Russian Federation) and the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). It started its activities in Baku in 2003. Its main goal was to promote research on the Caucasus in a multidisciplinary and (trans)regional approach with local, French and foreign collaborators alike, and to develop co-operation between researchers specialised in Caucasus studies.

For any inquiries about the scholarly work of the Observatoire, please contact Ms. Adeline Braux at adelinebraux@hotmail.com.

...and EUCAM re-opened

In May 2017 Europe-Central Asia Monitoring Initiative, better known under its acronym EUCAM, published Issue 17 of its "EUCAM Watch" Newsletter entitled "On a positive note" (available at <www.eucentralasia.eu/uploads/tx_ictcontent/EUCAM_Watch_17.pdf>). What looks like a regular event is indeed the resurrection of a project that under the Madrid-based think tank FRIDE had become a valuable companion to the EU-Central Asia Strategy and contributed numerous insights and analyses on the development of EU-Central Asia. What is more, in an era in which the EU has identified EU-Asia connectivity as an important priority in its Global Strategy, the Caspian basin and the Caucasus as a transit corridor gain increasing importance. It is for this reason that a revived EUCAM will contribute meaningful analysis also for the issues of Europeanisation in the Caucasus.

EUCAM is now run by the Centre for European Security Studies (CESS) and operated under a grant by the Open Society Foundations. Its aim is to raise the profile of Europe-Central Asian relations and to help strengthen European policies towards Central Asia. With CESS guidance and co-operation EUCAM will seek to continue to raise the profile of European-Central Asian relations in general, and more specifically to:

- critically, though constructively, scrutinise European policies towards Central Asia;
- enhance knowledge of European engagement with Central Asia through top-quality research;
- raise awareness on the importance of Central Asia and Europe's engagement, as well as discuss European policies among Central Asian communities;
- expand the network of experts and institutions from Europe and Central Asia to provide a forum for debate.

For any inquiries, please contact EUCAM at info@eucentralasia.eu. Interested students from the countries covered under the ENP are welcome to join and initiate debates.



5 — News and ongoing (cont.)

In search of teaching excellence in European Studies

"Teaching excellence" has become a catch phrase in academic discussions, but hardly anybody knows how to define it. Arguably, the focus should not even be on teaching, but on learning as a student experience. Nowadays, every modern syllabus is oriented towards learning outcomes, and teaching excellence could thus simply be understood as the best way of delivering these learning outcomes. However, there is probably more to it.

Recent debates which have started in the UK and spread to continental Europe question the emphasis on research output as the ultimate yardstick of a university's achievement. In adopting the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), the UK Government has been in the vanguard of establishing teaching as an independent marker of quality. It announced² that the TEF would:

- ensure all students receive an excellent teaching experience that encourages original thinking, drives up engagement and prepares them for the world of work
- build a culture where teaching has equal status with research, with great teachers enjoying the same professional recognition and opportunities for career and pay progression as great researchers
- provide students with the information they need to judge teaching quality
- recognise institutions that do the most to welcome students from a range of backgrounds and support their retention and progression
- include a clear set of outcome-focused criteria and metrics.

As laudable these goals may sound, in continental Europe, foremostly in Germany,³ similar proposals have created fears that a metrical approach to evaluating teaching and a dependence of funding on the teaching excellence thus measured could become another neo-liberal attempt at undermining universities' educational mission. We can expect this debate to gain momentum in the coming years, but the underlying question is still not answered: what is excellence in teaching?

Looking at the DESCnet experience in offering seasonal schools in European Studies, we can confidently say that so far we have seen a variety of innovative types of teaching used. There is indeed a good amount of experience in establishing simulations, role-plays and forms of interaction similar to what lawyers do at moot court competitions. Very often, however, these experiences are not recorded and preserved. Those in charge of developing simulations might be called to different tasks, and the knowledge is fleeting and often disappears. Another problem is related to timing. In the period of a summer school, it is possible to unfold a comprehensive learning exercise. Nevertheless, a learning experience that requires several hours or even days to unfold cannot be replicated in the 90 minutes of standard classroom time.

Hence, the question goes out to DESCnet scholars and beyond what your idea and experience of excellent teaching in European Studies is. I would like to offer this topic for debate and hope that this "News" column can provide a suitable forum for discussion. Replies may be also posted to the Facebook group "Association of European Studies for the Caucasus", and they may be published here later for a wider audience. Please join this debate and let us know your own experience with innovative approaches in teaching European Studies!



*Thomas Kruessmann
University of Tartu
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies*

² See <<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/teaching-excellence-framework-tef-everything-you-need-to-know>>.

³ See <[https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/german-universities-reject-](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/german-universities-reject-competitive-teaching-funding)

6 — Reports

International Conference "EU Association Agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: Through Co-operation towards Integration" Tbilisi (Georgia), 26-27 April 2017

The Conference aimed to gather professionals in order to discuss and reflect not only about the different aspects of the Association Agreements concluded with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, but also the state of affairs with other Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. The event was organised with the support of Erasmus+ Programme of the EU and hosted by the European Union Studies Association (ECSA Georgia) in co-operation with ECSA Moldova.

The Conference was inaugurated by the chair of the conference and President of ECSA Georgia, Prof. Gaga Gabrichidze, and the President of ECSA Moldova, Assoc. Prof. Vasile Cucerescu. In the opening session participant were also welcomed by:

- Prof. David Kereselidze, the Head of Academic Board of the New Vision University (Tbilisi);
- Mr. Teimuraz Murgulia, the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia;
- Mr. Carlo Natale, Minister - Deputy Head of the delegation of the European Union to Georgia;
- Mr. Gheorghe Leuca, the Ambassador of Moldova to Georgia;
- Prof. Ioan Horga, the Director of the Institute for Euroregional Studies of the University of Oradea (Romania);
- Assoc. Prof. Marta Pachocka, the Secretary-General of ECSA Poland;
- Prof. Carlos Eduardo Pacheco Amaral from the University of the Azores (Portugal), and
- Mr. Lasha Inauri, the head of the Eurointegration Department of the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia.

Assoc. Prof. Marta Pachocka of Warsaw School of Economics, who talked about the Migrant and Refugee Crises in the EU and their Consequences for EaP Cooperation, opened the event with a keynote speech. She pointed out that within the current context the EaP is no longer on the short list of priorities of the EU and the migrant and refugee crises lead to the shift of the EU's attention away from the six EaP countries.

The first session of the Conference started with the panel discussion on "Integration philosophy" which was moderated by Prof. Ioan Horga and Assoc. Prof. Oliver Reisner (Ilia State University). There were seven scholarly presentations on various aspects of integration and EU foreign policy.

The papers were presented in this session by Prof. Carlos Eduardo Pacheco Amaral, Prof. Elena Prus (Academy of Sciences of Moldova), Dr. Agnieszka Klos (Warsaw School of Economics), Tamta Tsotskhalashvili (New Vision University), Dr. Karim Belgacem (Chernivtsi National University, Ukraine), Dr. Tigran Yepremyan (Yerevan State University) and Assoc. Prof. Vasile Cucerescu. The session highlighted legal, political, economic and societal aspects of integration.

The theme of the second session was "Co-operation, Approximation, Association" and was moderated by Dr. Agnieszka Klos and Ms. Ekaterine Kardava, President of the Association "European Time". It focused on theoretical questions related to association and included presentations from Assoc. Prof. Oliver Reisner (Ilia State University), Assoc. Prof. Lita Surmava and Prof. Gaga Gabrichidze (New Vision University), Assoc. Prof. Lia Thuladze (Tbilisi State University), Dr. Narek Mkrtchyan (American University of Armenia) and Ina Ramasheuska (Leiden University). Among others, the speakers underlined that that approximation has a central place in the Association Agreements and constitutes the main indicator on which the conditionality relies.

The third session entitled „Cross-sectoral Progress" was moderated by Prof. Anatoliy Kruglashov (Chernivtsi National University) and Assoc. Prof. Lita Surmava. The session was devoted to sectoral analysis of the implementation of the Association Agreements. The speakers analysed the challenges that are likely to arise before Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the course of implementation of the Association Agreements with the EU into their legal systems. While discussing sectoral issues, they figured that implementation of the Association Agreements is alive and a large number of political, economic and legal factors influences ongoing process.

The fourth session on "Integration Prospects" was moderated by Prof. Carlos Eduardo Pacheco Amaral and Dr. Solomon Menabdishvili. The session focused on prospective and possibilities in future relations between the EU and EaP countries.

Report prepared by ECSA Moldova.

6 – Reports

International Conference
 “Georgia at the Nexus of Democratization and
 Europeanization: Prospects and Challenges”

Georgian Institute of Politics, Tbilisi (Georgia), 16 May 2017

Georgia has made impressive democratic progress over the past two decades. However, issues related to democratisation and Europeanisation – as well as the links between them – remain pressing. The country is striving towards a more consolidated democratic system while deepening integration with the EU and NATO. To address the prospects and challenges involved in these processes, on 16 May 2017 the Georgian Institute of Politics with support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) hosted the international conference “Georgia at the Nexus of Democratization and Europeanization: Trends and Challenges”. The Conference included three panels: Party Politics and Democratization; Parliamentarism; and Europeanization and Democracy.

The first panel’s discussants included Davit Usupashvili (former Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia), Davit Bakradze (current member of the Parliament of Georgia), Max Bader (Leiden University), Levan Tsutskiridze (Netherlands Institute of Multiparty Democracy), and Levan Kakhishvili (Georgian Institute of Politics), each of whom shared ideas for strengthening Georgia’s political party system. Usupashvili referred to the country’s politics as a “vicious circle—a multiparty competition to lead a single-party system.” Bakradze addressed concerns about the weakness of Georgia’s opposition parties, calling for a more pluralistic parliament with several functioning opposition parties. Bader assessed the potential impact of constitutional reforms on the stability of Georgia’s political parties, while Tsutskiridze spoke of the need for parties to become more internally democratic and consensus oriented to avoid being vehicles for powerful personalities. Levan Kakhishvili presented [his research](#) on political participation by Georgian youth, finding that young people are motivated more by values and ideology than is usually assumed.

The second panel featured Giorgi Kakhiani (Chairperson of the Committee of Procedural Issues and Rules of the Parliament of Georgia), Lika Sajaia (Transparency International Georgia), Laura Thornton (National Democratic Institute), and Tornike Zurabashvili (Civil Georgia). The speakers addressed issues related to Georgia’s ongoing constitutional reform process as well as the role Parliament can play in oversight of the executive branch. Sajaia and Thornton discussed the need to establish stronger norms regarding Parliament’s active role in the political process, while Kakhiani and Zurabishvili spoke primarily about the constitutional reform process.

The third and final panel featured Tamar Khulordava (Chairperson of the European Union Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia), Tornike Gordadze (French Institute for Higher National Defense Studies), Dirk Schuebel (European External Action Service), and Kakha Gogolashvili (Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies). While Schuebel discussed the perspective of the EU in its relations with Georgia, Khulordava and Gogolashvili spoke at length about the policies and priorities of the Georgian Government. Gogolashvili called on the Government to establish closer ties with Ukraine and Moldova. Gordadze discussed Euro-Atlantic integration issues from both the Georgian and EU perspective. In particular, he emphasised the necessity of the EU solving its own internal problems before considering further enlargement.

*This conference summary was originally published at
 <<http://gip.ge/international-conference-georgia-nexus-democratization-europeanization-prospects-challenges-geodem2017/>>.*

6 – Reports (cont.)

International Conference
 "Azerbaijan – Georgia – Turkey Trilateral Relations:
 Vision for the Future"

Centre for Strategic Research, Baku (Azerbaijan), 5 June 2017

On June 5, 2017, a conference titled "Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey Trilateral Relations: Vision for the Future" has been co-organised in Baku by Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SAM), Center for Strategic Studies under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey (TurkMFA SAM), and Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS).

The Conference brought together prominent speakers from the think tanks of the three countries - Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. The aim of the Conference was to give a vision to the policy and decision-makers for the promotion and advancement of the trilateral relations of the three countries. It was an utmost important and timely event in terms of latest geopolitical developments in and around the South Caucasus region, as well as in the light of each country's evolving bilateral and multilateral relations vis-à-vis neighbouring countries and regional blocs / organisations. The Conference was held in two sessions on the following topics: "Security Challenges in the Trilateral Relations" and "Economic and Energy Aspects of the Tripartite Relations".

In the opening of the Conference, Professor Dr. Novruz Mammadov, Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on foreign policy issues - Head of Foreign Policy Department, delivered a key note speech. This opening speech was followed by the speeches of Dr. Farhad Mammadov, Director of the SAM, Dos. Dr. Mesut Ozcan, Chairman of the Center for Strategic Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, as well as Mr. Kakha Gogolashvili, Director of EU Studies Center at GFSIS (Rondeli Foundation).

The moderator of the first panel was Dr. Gulshan Pashayeva, Deputy Director of SAM. In the first panel Dos. Dr. Ayça Ergun Ozbolat from Middle East Technical University talked on domestic preferences, regional integration and international challenges in the trilateral co-operation. Ambassador Giorgi Badridze, Senior Fellow of the GFSIS presented the geopolitics of trilateral co-operation.

Prof. Dr. Muhittin Ataman, Director for Education and Social Policies in the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETAV) discussed the means and necessities for inter-state cooperation in struggle against non-conventional threats. Finally, Dr. Javid Valiyev, Head of Foreign Policy Analysis Department in the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, talked about the security dimension of trilateral co-operation.

In the second panel, moderated by Prof. Dr. Muhittin Ataman, Ms. Gulmira Rzayeva, leading research fellow in the Economic Analysis and Global Affairs Department of the SAM, explained the impact of the Southern Gas Corridor on the regional gas market. Ambassador Valeri Chechelashvili, Senior Fellow from the GFSIS, talked about the perspectives for trilateral co-operation: transport, trade, energy. Vusala Cafarova, Strategic Analyst and Planning Manager from the Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication (CAERC), narrated the importance of the East-West transportation and trade corridor. Finally, Mr. Kakha Gogolashvili, Director of EU Studies Center at GFSIS, explained the EU-Georgia Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and its impact on trilateral economic co-operation.

The Conference stressed the importance of Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey trilateral relations in terms of the strengthening of the independence and sovereignty of the parties, an increasing effectiveness in cooperation and economic development, the importance of stability in the region and the significance of the energy and transport projects for the future of trilateral relations. The event also became a platform to discuss issues such as the geopolitics of trilateral co-operation, non-conventional threats, security directions of the trilateral co-operation, Southern Gas Corridor, East-West transport and trade corridor as well as the impact of the EU-Georgia free trade zone on trilateral economic co-operation.

7 — Opinions and comments

TURKEY'S BLACK SEA POLICY: A BALANCING ACT OR RUSSIAN ROULETTE?

Filiz Tutku Aydın
Social Sciences University of Ankara

After the Cold War, Turkey hoped for a new era in the Black Sea and that the region would henceforth be governed multilaterally, without being subject to great power rivalry. With the occupation of Crimea, however, Russia declared once again its intention to become a regional hegemon. In this article, I would like to shed light on the question why Turkey, despite being a regional power, does not pay sufficient attention to this hegemonic attempt by Russia. Instead, Turkey ignores the Russian advances in the Black Sea, focusing on trade relations with Russia. Its strategic interests are becoming increasingly harmed by Russia, and the Crimean Tatars, Turkish kin who have returned to their homeland with great difficulty, are the targets of ethnic and cultural repressive measures. It is apparent that Turkey needs to focus more on the nations and regions to its North and develop a geopolitical and visionary foreign policy rather than an ideological and short-term pragmatist one.

Turkish Black Sea policy in the 2000s: Seeking to balance the West and Russia

In the 2000s, taking advantage of the relative global economic prosperity, Turkey became the world's 16th largest economy. Foreign direct investment increased and inflation decreased to single digits following decades of high inflation. The Turkish construction, consumer electronics, automotive, real estate, tourism and financial sectors boomed as GDP increased and the middle class expanded. Turkey found itself in a position to economically support an activist foreign policy, which was motivated by its search of new markets as well as energy sources, in addition to other reasons.

The ruling AKP government that first came into power in 2002 challenged the previously fixed positions and reactionary policy of the Kemalist military-bureaucratic elite as well as the pro-Western foreign policy of Turkey. They proclaimed that Turkey would begin to follow an independent foreign policy.

Turkey reached out to all of its neighbours with whom it previously had problems and achieved breakthroughs in the Cyprus conflict, in its policy towards Armenia, and in the Kurdish issue.

These, and Turkey's large reforms in the fields of human rights and civil-military relations, contributed to its achievement of a candidate status for the European Union in 2005. Turkey increasingly employed soft power tools, assumed various mediation roles in international diplomacy, and attempted to develop bilateral relations and trade with a wider range of countries (Aras, 2014).

The next foreign policy transformation was the development of a Middle Eastern and Eurasian orientation. Davutoglu, the architect of Turkish foreign policy in this era, brought Turkey's identity issue to the foreign policy agenda. He argued that Turkey would be a stronger state if it was true to its "civilizational self" (referencing Turkey's Ottoman and Islamic past). Applied in practice to a country located between Europe and Asia, Turkey aimed to develop stronger relations with, on the one hand, the West, and on the other hand, the Middle Eastern and Eurasian states (Dalacoura, 2017, p.2.) Turkey attempted to practice soft power by projecting itself as a country demonstrating an 'alliance of civilizations' as opposed to the 'clash of civilizations' (Alliance of Civilizations Initiative, 2011). Consequently, Turkey became an active participant in the Islamic Cooperation Organisation, and during the Arab Spring it engaged with the Arab states, presenting itself as a model that brings together Islam and democracy. With respect to Eurasia, Turkey became a dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, developed pragmatist relations with Central Asian states which worked better than the ideological pan-Turkism policy of the 1990s (Öniş and Yılmaz, 2015, p.6-7), and further expanded its economic relations with Iran, Russia, and China.

7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

In the Black Sea region where Turkey's bilateral relations with Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan flourished, Turkey's foreign policy was not as proactive as it was elsewhere. The Crimean Tatars, Chechens and Circassians, the Turkic and Muslim peoples in the states north of Turkey, were mentioned far less frequently than Bosnians and Palestinians in foreign policy discourse. Turkey's foreign policy in the Black Sea was influenced more by the traditional concern to maintain maritime security, sovereignty on the Straits and the country's growing energy needs.

To maintain the Montreux Convention, Turkey aimed to limit the access of outside powers into the Black Sea. Turkey's wish to control foreign traffic in the region was dealt a blow after September 11, 2001, when the Black Sea gained strategic importance as a region adjacent to the Middle East and Afghanistan. The US policy towards the region included a missile defense shield in Eastern Europe and NATO expansion in the region with the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria into the alliance, while Ukraine and Georgia were given the prospect of future membership into NATO.

In 2007, an economically stronger Russia made it clear that it did not look favourably on Western attempts at hegemony in its "near abroad." The first attempt made by Russia at challenging the post-Soviet European security framework emerged in 2008 with the Russo-Georgian War. During the war, Turkey performed a delicate balancing act between Russia and the US. While it supported the territorial integrity of Georgia, it did not permit American warships, other than those carrying humanitarian aid, to Georgia, to cross the Straits. Once again, Turkey demonstrated its wish to preserve the integrity of the Montreux Convention. Turkey's stance on the crisis in Georgia was in general approved by Russia, and Turkey supported Russia's position of excluding the US from the post-war peace talks.

Another issue that brought Turkey and Russian interests closer in the Black Sea was the enormous rise and prosperity in Turkish-Russian economic relations to the extent that Russia became Turkey's second largest trading partner. Turkey became dependent on Russian energy, with gas and oil imports from Russia making up around

half of Turkish energy imports. Russia also became the biggest market for Turkish international contracting services⁴ while tourist arrivals from Russia continued to skyrocket. Vladimir Putin and Tayyip Erdogan, during their many high level 'strategic talks', agreed that their economic relations would not be affected by their conflicting interests in other areas, be it strategic, geopolitical, historical, ethnic, religious, or political, i.e. they decided to "compartmentalise" their relations. Despite economic co-operation on the surface, however, subtle competition continued. While Russia aimed to be the main source and hub of oil and natural gas, Turkey aimed to develop alternative routes for gas and oil from Central Asia and the Caucasus into Europe, and to become the hub rather than just a transit country. In 2006 with US support, Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan were able to establish the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, excluding Russia. A further extension of this pipeline through the NABUCCO project to Europe stalled when Russia prevented Turkmenistan from becoming a source-country (François, 2009).

Turkish Black Sea policy in the 2010s: Eurasianism, trade, and domestic policy

Since 2010, Turkey's foreign policy was subdued in the face of Russian advances in the Black Sea, the Middle East and other regions. First of all, Russia occupied Crimea and backed pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Turkey lost enormous ground strategically, particularly with the occupation of Crimea, where Russia has since been able to deploy nuclear warheads ("Dzhemilev: Russia brought six nuclear warheads to the Crimea", 2016). Russia plans to enlarge its Black Sea Fleet to the size of Turkey's own navy by 2020, and the Iskender missiles asserted to be already located in Crimea could be in a position to threaten the Turkish Black Sea coast ("Kırım'da korkutan nükleer hareketlilik", 2016) Russian jets continue violating Turkish airspace in the Black Sea as well as the Middle East in order to test Turkish defensive capabilities ("Havada 'Türkiye Rusya' gerilimi!", 2015).

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⁴ http://www.eic-federation.eu/media/uploads/newsletter/2012_01_march/tca_mc.pdf

7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

It is entirely possible that Russian actions in the Black Sea region could impact on the Turkish sovereignty on the Straits, guaranteed by the Montreux Convention, and open a discussion for re-negotiation of the terms of the latter.

Following its occupation of Crimea, widespread violations of the human rights of the Crimean Tatars were documented. (Ukraine: Fear, Repression in Crimea) (Osborne, 2016). The Russian Government in Crimea banned the *Meclis* (read Mejlis), the democratically elected parliament of the Crimean Tatars. The Crimean Tatar leader and human rights activist Mustafa Cemilev (Jemilev) and several *Meclis* leaders were prohibited from entering Crimea (Statement of Concerned Scholars on the Current Predicament of the Crimean Tatars, 2014). Tens of Crimean Tatars were kidnapped, murdered, tortured, or prosecuted unjustly (Roache, 2017; Blair, 2016). Islamic books were prohibited and the Crimean Tatar media were shut down (Statement of Concerned Scholars on the Current Predicament of the Crimean Tatars, 2014; Mirovalev and Sinyakov, 2014). People in Crimea were forced to receive Russian citizenship (Cooper and Gorbunova, 2017). The Crimean Tatar diaspora has been concerned about Russia's treatment of its co-ethnics and demanded that Turkey join the sanctions against Russia (Aydin, 2014).

Turkey was quick in defending the territorial integrity of Ukraine and opposing the Russian "annexation" of Crimea with Davutoglu immediately visiting the Ukrainian government after the Euromaidan Revolution ("Davutoğlu, Kiev'de muhalif lider Kličko ile görüştü", 2014). Moreover, Turkey protested against perceived human rights violations of Crimean Tatars and sent an unofficial monitoring mission to Crimea (Aydingün, 2015). Later, however, Turkey's position on the Russian annexation of Crimea and Turkish support of Crimean Tatars became subdued as Turkey failed to join the US and European Union in applying economic sanctions against Russia.

Russia then intervened decisively in the Syrian War, harming Turkey's interests by weakening the American and Turkish-trained Free Syria Army and supporting factions, such as Assad and the PYD/YPG, that Turkey opposed.

Russia has also refused to recognise Kurdish separatists in South Eastern Turkey as a terrorist organisation (Rudaw, 2016). Tensions between Russia and Turkey escalated further with the downing of a Russian warplane which was asserted to have crossed the border despite warnings by Turkey over the Turkish-Syrian border. The almost complete break-down of relations and application of economic sanctions on Turkey demonstrated that little trust was built between the two countries, despite decades of economic co-operation.⁵

Since 2010, Russia began to oppose Turkish interests in other ways. Russia supported far-right political parties in Europe that were opposed to Turkey's membership and immigration from Muslim majority countries (Bradley, 2017). Russia encroached on Turkey with missile bases in the Caspian Sea, Armenia, Syria, and Cyprus. While Turkish interests focused on peace and stability in the Black Sea region, Russia continued to re-invigorate the frozen conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Moldova, and finally created a new conflict in Ukraine.

All this begs the question as to why Erdoğan has declared Russia a strategic partner. After all, Russia and Turkey belong to opposing security organisations (CSTO and NATO), and Turkey and Russia have almost no military co-operation. Since Davutoglu, who had a strong understanding of the history of Russian-Turkish relations, has stepped down and as a response to worsening relations with the West, AKP leaders now seem to ponder the Eurasianist option. Turkish Eurasianism has been propagated by many opinion leaders for some time in Turkey, supported by both the Russian lobby and Russian and pro-Russian media within Turkey. Turkish Eurasianists are a red-brown alliance of Turkish ultra-nationalists and the Kemalist Left who are anti-American and who believe that a Turkish-Russian alliance would create a balance with the Western powers in the region. The problem with the 'Eurasianist' option is the enormous number of conflicting interests between Turkey and Russia as well as the unequal balance of power between the two countries (Öniş and Yılmaz, 2015, p.4).

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⁵ Russia applied economic sanctions on Turkey, limited the imports, limiting the ability of Turkish businessmen to do business in Russia, discouraged Russian tourists from visiting Turkey by ending charter flights, and visa free travel between Russia and Turkey.

("Russia Expands Sanctions Against Turkey After the Downing of Jet", 2015)

7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

Therefore, any 'Eurasianist Union' between Turkey and Russia would be on Russian terms. Indeed, according to Russian "Eurasianism," Russia will obtain hegemony over other Eurasian countries (Bassin et al, 2015). For instance, it is not clear whether the newly proposed pipeline 'Turkish Stream' and Turkey's first nuclear power plant at Akkuyu, which is to be built and owned by Russia, will truly serve Turkish strategic interests.

The other significant factor in the Turkish-Russian rapprochement is the strong lobby of the construction, tourism, and agricultural sectors. The construction sector, in particular, has strong ties with the ruling party in Turkey (Sönmez, 2015). Turkish economic growth slowed down in the 2010s, and consequently Turkish-Russian trade relations loomed larger.

It is still too early to make a conclusive statement, but it is possible to detect a trend of alignment towards Russia, particularly after the 2016 coup attempt. Unlike Western governments who were slow in denouncing the action, Russia was the first country to announce its support for Turkey's ruling government during the coup attempt. Western heads of state have not always hidden the fact that they would like Erdogan to step down and showed their disapproval for the AKP's desire to change from the parliamentary system of government into a presidential system, which would prolong Erdogan's rule for more than a decade. The AKP is also distrustful of the United States which hosts Fethullah Gülen, who Turkey accuses of plotting the coup attempt, and of the European countries that did not extradite Gulenists upon the request of Turkey's government. Western countries contest AKP's interpretation of the coup attempt and have repeatedly criticized the purging of the military, judiciary, the civil service, police, and education sectors. Consequently, Turkish foreign policy currently is largely affected by Turkish domestic policy.

Conclusion and policy proposals

The post-Cold War Turkish Black Sea policy initially focused on seeking regionalism and multilateralism. Later in the 2000s, with the emerging great power politics in the Black Sea, Turkey sought to balance the Russian and Western powers in the Black Sea, and Black Sea regionalism was weakened. Despite significant reforms in Turkish foreign policy-making in the post-Cold War era, one area of continuity is the significant role ideology, whether Kemalism, "neo-Ottomanism", or Eurasianism, has in determining policy. The Turkish Eurasianist orientation, which envisions a future Turkish-Russian alliance, ignores the past and current geopolitical conflicts of interests between the two countries.

The time has come for foreign policy to be based on geopolitics rather than ideology. Turkey needs to develop a multidimensional foreign policy, paying equal attention to Europe, the Middle East, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. It is time to bring 'the Northern dimension' into Turkish foreign policy. Turkey should no longer take the Black Sea for granted, for its own security and maintaining the security of its ethnic and religious kin, particularly the Crimean Tatars.

There is a tendency with Turkish foreign policy-makers to confuse trade relations with strategic partnership. It is time to exchange short-term pragmatism with visionary politics. 'Wider Black Sea' regionalism which includes Eastern Europe and the Baltics (Umland 2016), must be developed as a visionary strategic concept against Eurasianism which is little more than a neo-hegemonic project of Russia. Turkey must revive regionalism in the Black Sea as a long-term goal that could help to mitigate great power confrontation there.

An earlier version of this article was published in Black Sea Security 2017 Vol 29 No. 1, pp. 51-56. See <http://geostrategy.org.ua/images/BSS_29_engl_FIN.pdf>.

Filiz Tutku Aydın
Social Sciences University of
Ankara



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7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

AZERBAIJAN – TURKEY – GEORGIA: A GEOPOLITICAL AXIS OR AN ACCIDENTAL ALLIANCE?

Fuad Shahbazov
Independent political analyst,
formerly with Wikistrat Inc.

The Georgian coastal city of Batumi hosted, on May 23, a trilateral meeting of the defense ministers of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia.¹ This trilateral cooperation format was inaugurated in 2012, during a ministerial meeting in Trabzon, Turkey. As expected, a new military memorandum was signed during the Batumi meeting: the three sides pledged to boost military ties as well as increase co-operation in the fields of military education and military medicine, counterterrorism (including the protection of pipelines and railways), and joint large-scale military exercises.² "Our co-operation in the field of defense contributes to strengthening security, peace and economic development," Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov told reporters in Batumi.³

In addition to the signed memorandum entailing defense ministry-level co-operation, the three countries agreed to extend co-operation between the general staffs of their armed forces. Thus, in autumn 2017, the chiefs of the general staffs of the armed forces of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia will gather together in Tbilisi under this framework. Moreover, new joint military drills, dubbed "Caucasian Eagle," started on June 5 in Tbilisi. According to the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense, its military will take part in the exercise until June 14.⁴ Armenia has frequently expressed concern for the expanding "Azerbaijani – Georgian – Turkish" trilateralism in the South Caucasus, since its official unveiling five years ago. More recently, Yerevan's negative rhetoric toward the trilateral alliance has subsided somewhat due to Armenia's close diplomatic ties with Georgia.

The latter country facilitates Armenia's connectivity with its ally Russia as well as global markets, mainly via the Tbilisi-Gyumri railway. Nevertheless, last month, Armenian officials again argued that the deepening military co-operation between Baku, Ankara and Tbilisi poses a serious national security challenge to Yerevan. "The new trilateral format in the region is seeking to isolate Armenia even more," local expert Ruben Safrastian declared.⁵ The Government of Azerbaijan, however, has been quick to reply that the trilateral partnership is strictly aimed at strengthening economic co-operation between the three countries and it does not pose a threat to regional stability. "This trilateral co-operation contributes to regional security, stability and sustainable development and is not directed against other countries," declared Novruz Mammadov, the assistant to the President of Azerbaijan for foreign policy issues.

Turkey's continued involvement in the triangle with Georgia and Azerbaijan is arguably connected to Ankara's desire to strengthen its geopolitical influence in the South Caucasus. In the aftermath of the unsuccessful 2016 military coup in Turkey and subsequent deteriorating relations with the EU, Ankara's foreign policy has been rapidly shifting toward the East, including the Caucasus. To some degree, the trilateral alliance is seen as a suitable politico-military, cultural and economic platform for Turkey to strengthen its influence in the South Caucasus. Indeed, Turkey is interested in becoming a regional oil and natural gas hub; however, without Azerbaijani natural gas passing through Georgian territory, these ambitions would remain a dream for Ankara.

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¹ See: Azertac, <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1063964> of 23 May 2017

² See: APA <<http://en.apa.az/azerbaijan-military/azerbaijan-army-azerbaijani-armed-forces/trilateral-meeting-of-azerbaijani-georgian-turkish-defense-ministers-kicks-off-in-batumi.html>>

³ Azertac, <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1064000> of 23 May 2017

⁴ APA <[http://en.apa.az/azerbaijan-military/azerbaijan-army-azerbaijani-armed-forces/azerbaijani-servicemen-take-part-in-caucasus-](http://en.apa.az/azerbaijan-military/azerbaijan-army-azerbaijani-armed-forces/azerbaijani-servicemen-take-part-in-caucasus-eagle-military-drills.html)

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⁵ EADaily, <<https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2017/05/23/format-turciya-gruziya-azerbaydzhan-ugrozhaet-armenii-vostokoved>> of 23 May 2017

7 – Opinions and comments (cont.)

Various separatist movements across the South Caucasus and Anatolia provide further impetus toward closer regional security co-operation among these three countries. Turkey's long-time efforts to counter Kurdish militants (notably, the Kurdistan Workers' Party—PKK) in the Eastern provinces, the insecurity stemming from the military confrontation over Azerbaijan's occupied Karabakh region, as well as Russian occupation of Georgian separatist territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia together have encouraged the three countries to seek closer relations.

To date, one of the most tangible results of the co-operative triangle has been the 826-kilometer-long Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project (the third such trilateral link after the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline) that directly links the three countries. The strategically important railway is supposed to be operational by the end of June 2017 and raises expectations in certain corners that the trilateral platform can be turned into a more robust alliance.¹ All the aforementioned factors notwithstanding, Baku, Ankara and Tbilisi's trilateral military co-operation at this stage is arguably focused mainly on the security of regional energy pipelines that run from Azerbaijan through Georgia, near South Ossetia, and continue into eastern Turkey. As Azerbaijani Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov noted during an inaugural meeting of the three countries' defense ministers in August 2014, the major reason for holding trilateral military drills is the need to protect pipeline and railroad infrastructure that crosses those states.²

While clearly based on the mutual interests of its three participating countries, the Ankara-Baku-Tbilisi trilateral alliance is also a gateway for Turkey to access the Caspian basin and Central Asia via Azerbaijani and Georgian territory. Meanwhile, Baku and Tbilisi promote this regional triangle in order to cultivate regional political support for the peaceful settlement of their ongoing conflicts. And while, so far, no significant step has been taken toward the reconciliation of these territorial conflicts, the positive rhetoric coming out of the annual ministerial meetings suggests that the new trilateral platform will likely remain an influential force in the South Caucasus for the long term.



*Fuad Shahbazov
Independent political analyst,
formerly with Wikistrat Inc.*

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¹ Daily Sabah, <<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/2017/05/23/baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-to-be-operational-by-end-of-june>> of 22 May 2017

² News.az< <http://news.az/articles/politics/91335>> of 20 August 2014

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- Geybullayeva, Arzu
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- Ismayilov, Murad
A Resacralization of Public Space and the Future of (Political) Islam in Azerbaijan: Quo Vadis?
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- Kakhishvili, Levan
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- **Podadera Rivera, Pablo / Garashchuk, Anna**
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- **Pop, Adrian**
From Cooperation to Confrontation: The Impact of Bilateral Perceptions and Interactions on the EU-Russia Relations in the Context of Shared Neighbourhood
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- **Roch, Stefan**
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Design: studiofiur

Layout: paniola