

CAUCASUS RESEARCH RESOURCE CENTERS

# **THE 7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CRRC CONFERENCE**

## **TAKING STOCK OF CHANGE: THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AFTER A TURBULENT YEAR**

JUNE 25-26

The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual CRRC Conference

**TAKING STOCK OF CHANGE:  
THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AFTER A TURBULENT YEAR**

June 25-26



## **ABOUT CRRC**

The Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) is a network of research and research support centers in the capital cities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Established in 2003, CRRC's goal is to strengthen social science research and public policy analysis in the South Caucasus. Over the past seventeen years, CRRC offices have become a nexus of activity for the social science community in the South Caucasus by providing open access to data, scholarly literature, and professional training for social science researchers. For more information about CRRC and the upcoming conference, please visit the respective country websites at [crrc.am](http://crrc.am), [crrc.az](http://crrc.az) and [crrc.ge](http://crrc.ge).

## **ABOUT CAUCASUS BAROMETER**

The Caucasus Barometer is a bi-annual nationwide household survey conducted by CRRC offices in the South Caucasus. Since 2004, CRRC has interviewed around 45,000 residents of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia on socio-economic issues, values, beliefs, and political attitudes. Since 2015, Caucasus Barometer has been administered in Armenia and Georgia only. To find more about the survey and access the dataset, please visit [caucasusbarometer.org](http://caucasusbarometer.org).

*JUNE 25, 2021*

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11:30-12:00 Online registration of participants

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12:00-12:15 Opening remarks by Dr. Timothy K. Blauvelt, Board of Trustees, CRRC-Georgia; Ilia State University and American Councils for International Education

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**PANEL 1: COVID-19 AND INNOVATIONS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCE AND POLICY RESEARCH  
CHAIR: DR. KOBAN TURMANIDZE, CRRC-GEORGIA**

12:15-12:30 **Women Entrepreneurship in Armenia: Challenges and opportunities.**  
Mariam Yevdokimova, Lilit Yezekyan, Heghine Manasyan  
CRRC-Armenia (Yerevan)

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12:30-12:45 **Methodological challenges in fieldwork in Armenia over the pandemic:  
Reflections of major shifts in research**  
Ella Karagulyan, Sona Balasanyan, Zaruhi Simonyan  
CRRC-Armenia (Yerevan)

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12:45-13:00 **What does getting COVID 19 change?**  
Dustin Gilbreath and Elene Ergeshidze  
CRRC-Georgia (Tbilisi)

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13:00-13:15 **Experiences of “Transnational Motherhood” by Georgian Labor Migrants to Italy  
and Their Teenage Children: How to Make the Most of Online Intergenerational  
Interviews?**  
Tinatin Zurabishvili  
University of Bologna (Italy)

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13:15-13:30 Q&A

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13:30-13:45 *Break*

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## PANEL 2: POLITICS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

CHAIR: LEVAN TSUTSKIRIDZE, EASTERN EUROPEAN CENTER FOR MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY

13:45-14:00 **Georgian Democracy in Decline: A Lack of EU Democratising Influence?**  
Soso Dzamukashvili  
Council of Europe (Strasbourg, France)

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14:00-14:15 **Covid-19 and Politics: National and International Test of the Parasite Model of Democratization**  
Alexandre Avaliani  
Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (Tbilisi)

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14:15-14:30 **Oligarchs and Judges: The Political Economy of the Courts in post-Soviet Unconsolidated Democracies**  
Thomas Barrett  
Yerevan Brusov State University (Armenia), Free University of Berlin (Germany)

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14:30 -14:45 **The European Union (EU), Russia and China power strategy in the South Caucasus**  
Aytan Aliyeva  
University of Vienna (Austria)

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14:45-15:00 Q&A

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15:00-15:30 *Long break*

15:30-16:30 **KEYNOTE SPEECH: BIG DATA FOR URBAN MOBILITY IN YEREVAN - HOW TAXI AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT CAN INFORM URBAN PLANNING**  
Dr. Gevorg Yeghikyan  
ISTI-CNR (Pisa, Italy)

16:30-17:15 *Long break*

17:15-18:15 **Keynote speech: Democratic Hypocrisy and Out-group Threat: Explaining Citizen Support for Democratic Erosion**  
Dr. Jennifer McCoy  
Distinguished University Professor of Political Science, Georgia State University (United States)

June 26, 2021

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12:00-12:15 Online registration of participants



**PANEL 3: CHANGING SOCIETIES OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS.**  
**CHAIR: DR. SONA BALASANYAN, CRRC-ARMENIA**

12:15-12:30 **Is Baku a “Smart City?” – Challenges, Perspectives, and Potential**  
Zulfiyya Mehdiyeva  
CRRC-Azerbaijan (Baku)

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12:30-12:45 **Moral Comfort and Efficiency of Civil Activism in Contemporary Georgia**  
Lana Gvinjilia  
Ilia State University (Tbilisi, Georgia)

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12:45-13:00 **Propelled Towards Prosperity: the Case of the Creative Economy in Georgia**  
Jessica Gosling,<sup>1</sup> Elene Toidze,<sup>2</sup> Ani Vashakmadze<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>University College London (United Kingdom), <sup>2</sup>Creative Georgia (Tbilisi), <sup>3</sup>Business and Technology University (Tbilisi, Georgia)

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13:00-13:15 **Connectivity, Remoteness and Disconnection in and Around the Caucasus and Eastern Black Sea Region(s)**  
Franziska Smolnik,<sup>1</sup> Susanne Fehlings,<sup>2</sup> Andrea Weiss.<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>German Institute for International and Security Affairs – SWP (Berlin)  
<sup>2</sup>Frobenius Institute for Research in Cultural Anthropology (Frankfurt am Main, Germany)  
<sup>3</sup>Istanbul Policy Center

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13:15-13:30 Q&A

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13:30-13:45 *Break*

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**PANEL 4: PROSPECTS OF CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS**  
**CHAIR: DR. GURANDA BURSULAIA**

**Peacebuilding in Nagorno-Karabakh: a Gender Perspective**

13:45-14:00 Claudia Ditel  
Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz (Austria)

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**The Ethos of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict: Socio-Psychological analyzes of obstacles to peace in Karabakh Conflict**

14:00-14:15 Javadbay Khalilzada  
Kent State University (United States)

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**The Role of Nagorno-Karabakh Civil Society: Life Under the New Status Quo**

14:15-14:30 Nona Shahnazarian<sup>1,2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, (Yerevan, Armenia), <sup>2</sup>Center for Independent Social Research (St. Petersburg, Russia)

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**War Recurrence, Ceasefire, and Offence-defense Balance**

14:30-14:45 Namig Abbasov,<sup>1</sup> Ceyhun Mahmudlu<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Arizona State University (United States), <sup>2</sup>Cornell University (United States)

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14:45-15:00 Q&A

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15:00-15:30 *Long break*

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**KEYNOTE SPEECH: THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AFTER 2020: NEW AND OLD DIMENSIONS OF REGIONAL FRACTURE**

15:30-16:30 Dr. Laurence Broers  
Conciliation Resources (London, United Kingdom)

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16:30-16:45 Closing remarks by Koba Turmanidze (President of CRRC-Georgia)

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## PANEL 1: COVID-19 AND INNOVATIONS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCE AND POLICY RESEARCH

**CHAIR: DR. KOBA TURMANIDZE,**

*CRRC-GEORGIA*

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**MARIAM YEVDOKIMOVA,**

**LILIT YEZEKYAN,**

**HEGHINE MANASYAN**

*CRRC-Armenia (Yerevan)*

### **Women Entrepreneurship in Armenia: Challenges and opportunities.**

Gaps in entrepreneurial activity between men and women exist across the globe, yet the need to close this gap is essential to addressing a variety of issues ranging from economic growth to human rights. Challenges to women entrepreneurship on a global scale include access to finance, socio-cultural factors, low self-esteem/confidence, institutional voids, poor entrepreneurial education, and lack of professional networks. Challenges to women entrepreneurship within Armenia reflect these global challenges with more specific issues originating from less access to property, land, and family finances. To identify the challenges of women engaged in business, we developed a women-owned business profile (firm size, turnover, sector etc.) and compared its main indicators to men-owned businesses. To reveal the main obstacles faced by women in the context of entrepreneurship activity, to develop a regression model to classify the factors affecting on women-owned business development prospects we use survey data gathered among 400 SMEs within the “Economic Growth and Economic Empowerment of Women in Armenia” project implemented by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, in partnership with the United Kingdom Government’s Good Governance Fund.

The profile of respondents in this survey reflects global trends among women entrepreneurs, particularly regarding the smaller size of women-owned businesses. Our findings indicate the main obstacle for women is access to finance. Moreover, men are more likely than women to use personal/household savings to start a business, and women are more likely than men to seek

loans. However, currently, existing support programs available to women in Armenia primarily focus on business education, skills building, and networking with limited opportunities for direct financial assistance or grants. Furthermore, stereotypes are also indirectly affecting women’s engagement in entrepreneurship. According to men, “housekeeping and childcare responsibilities” is the main specific barrier that women in business are not able to overcome, while among female respondents, the most predominant answer is “absence of initial capital.”

**ELLA KARAGULYAN,**

**SONA BALASANYAN,**

**ZARUHI SIMONYAN**

*CRRC-Armenia (Yerevan)*

### **Methodological challenges in fieldwork in Armenia over the pandemic: Reflections of major shifts in research.**

From how to do research during the pandemic to what to research has become a major issue after the WHO declared the situation with COVID-19 as pandemic. It is clear that the value of online research has multiplied, but the donors’ and research organizations’ responses were not rapid in Armenia. Mostly, focus group discussions as research methods were easy to be conducted online, yet methodological issues that arise from this shift of implementing the method online arose. Further, Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) became one important mean of surveying, yet some important data initiatives that assume lengthy interviews (such as the Caucasus Barometer and the World Values Survey) are still important to be realized face to face, but with new rates of non-response (due to higher number of refusals). Thus, the data weighting methodologies of such surveys have to be reflected upon. Based on CRRC-Armenia’s experience, this presentation reflects on major challenges CRRC-Armenia met due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is followed by major methodological reflections to inform future research conduct in the country.



**DUSTIN GILBREATH,**

**ELENE ERGESHIDZE**

*CRRC-Georgia (Tbilisi)*

### **What does getting COVID 19 change?**

While COVID 19 is ever present in the news, politics, and everyday life. It has had large scale economic impacts globally. US intelligence agencies have gone so far as to say it is the largest event since World War Two. Yet, little work has been done to understand what COVID 19 has changed in terms of individual's attitudes who have had COVID 19. Similarly, although large scale research has been conducted looking at the macroeconomic impact of COVID 19 on economies, little work has explored the economic impact of having COVID 19. To address these gaps in research, this paper uses the Caucasus Barometer 2020 data as well as the CRRC Georgia and World Bank COVID Monitor waves seven and eight to understand how attitudes have changed as a result of being infected with COVID 19. It specifically tests for changes in social, political, and economic attitudes. It further explores the economic impacts on households of having a family member that has tested positive for COVID 19. To accomplish these goals, the paper makes use of multi-variate matching with genetic matching with time invariant and pre-COVID economic data from households as matching variables.

**TINATIN ZURABISHVILI**

*University of Bologna (Italy)*

### **Experiences of “Transnational Motherhood” by Georgian Labor Migrants to Italy and Their Teenage Children: How to Make the Most of Online Intergenerational Interviews?**

A relatively new migration route taken by numerous women from Georgia to Italy remains, so far, understudied, although there have been certain scholarly attention to the issue of feminization of labor migration from Georgia in general. While reliable statistics are still missing, it is common knowledge that many of the migrants who go to work from Georgia to Italy leave behind their children, thus facing challenges of “transnational motherhood” during the period of their migration.

Challenges associated with transnational motherhood are discussed in the literature along with many other aspects of transnationalism.

However, there is a rather moderate pool of studies that focuses exclusively and thoroughly on the experiences of transnational mothers and their children (e.g., Banfi & Boccagni, 2011; Carling et al., 2012; Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Graham & Jordan 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1997; Illanes, 2010; Nobles, 2011; Parreñas, 2001). Probably due to a very specific nature and stricter ethical requirements of research involving children, only one study has been located so far that provides first-hand evidence of “transnational children’s” experiences (Ferrufino, C. et al., 2007, quoted in Illanes, 2010, p. 213), although the importance of further studies focused on children with a migration background has been highlighted (e.g., Graham & Jordan, 2011, p. 764; Illanes, 2010, p. 222; Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002, pp. 784-5; Pessar, 2000, p.58).

The present study aims to fill this gap, focusing on the experiences of Georgian domestic workers (badanti) in Italy and their teenage children, separated for indeterminate periods of time due to mothers’ labor migration. Empirically, the study focuses with equal attention on the experiences of mothers and children, collecting first-hand narratives of the experiences of child-parent separation as the mothers and their children describe them during intergenerational interviews, in order to understand to what extent mothers and children are aware of emotional challenges faced by each other.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted online, which, under normal circumstances, would have been a highly undesirable, if not a clearly unacceptable modality of qualitative interviewing. Yet, a total of 36 interviews I have completed so far make it possible to judge about the ways that would allow the researchers to make the most of online qualitative interviewing, considering the long duration of the pandemic that may not let us get back to “normal” research activities any time soon.

## PANEL 2: POLITICS AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

**CHAIR: LEVAN TSUTSKIRIDZE,**

*Eastern European Center for Multiparty Democracy*

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**SOSO DZAMUKASHVILI**

*Council of Europe (Strasbourg, France)*

### **Georgian Democracy in Decline: A Lack of EU Democratising Influence?**

After the 2003 Rose Revolution, Georgia started to follow the Western path of democratisation. However, the Saakashvili administration soon showed authoritarian tendencies, which led to democratic backsliding in the country. In 2012, after the democratic elections, the Georgian Dream party came to power with democratic agenda. As a result, the democratic quality in Georgia substantially recovered and the country achieved the closest-ever relations with the European Union. Despite these shifts, the quality of democracy in Georgia started to struggle in the following years. Thus, the country failed to make a historical move and develop a genuine democratic system.

The paper largely draws from the literature on external influences on regime changes in former Soviet space in the post-Cold War era. Thus, it will focus on the impact of external democracy reinforcing influence on the quality of democracy in Georgia. The paper will borrow the concept of competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way 2010) to describe the nature of the regime led by the Georgian Dream government. Competitive authoritarianism refers to partly democratic regimes (hybrid regimes) in former Soviet states, which the absence of leverage from external democratising actors (the EU) are prone to fall authoritarian. The paper argues that between 2012 and 2016 the EU had high leverage, i.e., conditionality over the Georgian government due to the requirements for obtaining the Association Agreement (including DCFTA and visa liberalisation). However, despite the conclusion of the Association Agreement, Georgia's quality of democracy started to decline, and the situation eventually resulted in a current political crisis. Thus, the paper will aim to analyse the role of external influence (democratising) in the decline of the quality of democracy in Georgia.

The research question will be:

Q: How has the EU influenced the degree of democracy in Georgia between the years 2013 and 2020?

The timeframe will encompass the period between the years 2012 and 2020.

The study will employ the process-tracing method to analyse the Georgian government's commitment to democracy in the presence/absence of the leverage of the EU. The paper will also import secondary statistical data (democracy indices) to assess the changes in democracy in Georgia between 2012 and 2020. The database of the Caucasus Barometer, namely the population's attitudes toward external actors, will also be employed in the research.

**ALEXANDRE AVALIANI**

*Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (Tbilisi)*

### **Covid-19 and Politics: National and International Test of the Parasite Model of Democratization.**

Covid-19 is one of the biggest threats to the wellbeing of humanity that has ever existed. The pandemic has influenced nearly every aspect of human life for at least a year and may continue to play a big part in this regard. Thus, it is crucial to study those variables under the influence. One of the influenced aspects of mankind that have been an area of interest for scholars, politicians, philosophers and the general public (and understandably so) is culture. There have been many speculations and studies concerning the influence of the virus on cultural issues. The present study investigates this issue; to be more precise and concrete, it examines Covid-19s influence on political attitudes. From another perspective, there are several theories and hypotheses that help explain this causality. Thus, the pandemic provides a rare opportunity for enriching fundamental theoretical literature with more causal data by examining the occurring natural experiment. One of such theories that might help illuminate the relationship between the novel Coronavirus and changes in political ideology is the Parasite Stress Theory (of Values and Sociality) (Thornhill & Fincher, 2014). According to this theory, infectious diseases have been the most important cause of evolutionary change, which resulted not only in acquiring of cellular, classical immune system, but also a behavioral one. Functions of the behavioral immune system are psychological and behavioral mechanisms for infectious-disease avoidance and for managing fitness-reducing effects of such diseases. "The

behavioral immune system... includes ancestrally adaptive feelings (e.g., disgust), cognition (e.g., worry about contagion)... caution about or unwillingness to interact with out-group people, and prejudice against people perceived as unhealthy, contaminated, or unclear.” (2014). This means that under high parasite-stress conditions people become more conservative (politically), nationalistic, xenophobic, authoritarian and collectivistic. This hypothesis, which is called the Parasite Model/hypothesis of Democratization, evidently would predict that the Covid-19 pandemic would cause the above-mentioned shift in values in affected populations. There is also an alternative explanation to this causality, which also predicts the same outcome. According to this hypothesis, anxiety and Right-Wing-Authoritarianism sequentially (in that order) mediate this connection. Yet another explanation argues that this effect is caused by people merely supporting the status quo and authorities in times of crisis. The first study reported here analyzed publicly available international data from websites of Dalia, Freedom House, Heritage Foundation, CIA, and the WHO. The study resulted in low-to-medium correlations favoring the Parasite Hypothesis of Democratization. The second study uses the data collected from CRR (Caucasus Research Resource Centers, 2019-2020) website to investigate Covid-19 influence on several issues/variables associated with democracy, conservatism and right-wing politics on a national (Georgian) level.

## **THOMAS BARRETT**

*Yerevan Brusov State University (Armenia),  
Free University of Berlin (Germany)*

### **Oligarchs and Judges: The Political Economy of the Courts in post-Soviet Unconsolidated Democracies.**

In societies without the “Rule of Law,” what role do the law and its interpreters - the judiciary - play? In post-Soviet countries, courts wield substantial constitutional power and formal independence. Yet in practice, courts have often proved unwilling or unable to use this power or to preserve their independence. In the literature, it is often suggested that due to the politicisation of the judiciary, courts in the “unconsolidated democracies” of the post-Soviet space (Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine) are subservient to the executive as in their autocratic neighbours. Increased political competition in these countries has not produced independent

judiciaries, as the Western narrative of judicial empowerment would suggest.

However, since 2014 there has been an explosion of judicial interference in the distribution of political and economic power in several post-Soviet countries, which ran counter to the will of the executive. Courts have struck down major legislative initiatives, ruled on the formation of governments and overseen revolutionary transfers of power. This does not mean that these countries have developed ‘independent’ judiciaries in the Western legal understanding, nor does it mean that judicial rulings are available to the highest bidder. Instead, it indicates that under certain conditions, judges are capable of semi-autonomous decision making based on some combination of self-preservation, self-interest or neo-patrimonial ties.

These sudden changes in judicial behavior are strongly linked to the political economy of unconsolidated democracies. As Lucan Way has argued, these countries are “pluralist by default”: they lack the conditions necessary for establishing a consolidated democracy, yet equally weak governance structures and fractured elites have prevented the creation of an autocracy. As a result they oscillate between periods of consolidation (when rulers build a dominant patrimonial network) and fragmentation (when multiple patrimonial networks compete for power, often after so-called “Colour Revolutions”).

This paper argues that when the concentration of political and economic power in the ruling group weakens in unconsolidated democracies, “semi-independent” judicial interventions increase. This weakening of the power vertical occurred in Armenia after the Velvet Revolution in 2018 and in Ukraine after the Orange Revolution in 2004 and the Maidan Revolution in 2014. In Moldova it occurred after the defeat of the Communist Party in 2009 and the sudden fall of hegemonic oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc in 2019. In each case, courts immediately took on a much larger role as gatekeepers of power amid competition between patronage pyramids. Meanwhile in Georgia, the heavily centralised and stronger state apparatus built by Mikhail Saakashvili survived the defeat of his United National Movement and the victory Bidzina Ivanishvili’s Georgian Dream party. Although the judiciary briefly resisted attempted reforms that threatened their removal, they quickly accommodated themselves to the new elite, which regained its hegemony over judicial rulings.

**AYTAN ALIYEVA**

*University of Vienna (Austria)*

### **The European Union (EU), Russia, and China power strategy in the South Caucasus.**

The South Caucasus has throughout history been a political and civilizational fault zone between Europe, Turkey, Russia, and Persia. Since the Soviet collapse, the South Caucasus states have themselves acquired the agency in international politics, even as they remain buffeted by the larger forces swirling around them. Three countries in the South Caucasus and the breakaway territories that have tried to split away from them constitute one of the most diverse and challenging regions on earth. Over the last few years, the South Caucasus region has captured international attention because of disputes between the EU and Russia, its unresolved conflicts, and its role as an energy transport corridor to Europe. We can see the attempt of a new global power - China in the South Caucasus within the Belt and Road Initiative framework.

Three global powers propose several projects and have different game rules and tactics for maximising their sphere of influence over the South Caucasus. The research project investigates the power strategy of the EU, Russia, and China that will lead to a clash or cooperation among the three global players in the region. The main focus will be on the comparison of projects – European Neighbourhood Policy and its Eastern Partnership Program, Eurasian Economic Union and Belt and Road Initiative accordingly and the relations and strategies of three countries in the South Caucasus with global powers.

Undoubtedly, the United States, Iran, Turkey, and other players have strategic interests in the region, but they did not propose projects included in the countries of the region. I plan to analyze the EU, Russia and China strategy for the region as global powers, as well as their projects that they are eager to encourage Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia which reveals a new approach to the research topic.

There is considerable geographical overlap between the three integration processes. Two of the EU's Eastern Partners, Armenia and Belarus, are also members of the EAEU. BRI is the most comprehensive: all the countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership and all the members of the Eurasian Economic Union are involved, as well as a number of EU member-states. Historically, if great powers had overlapping spheres of influence,

there would almost certainly be a conflict between them.

Thus, the European Union with the Eastern Partnership program under the European Neighbourhood Policy, Russia with Eurasian Economic Union and China with Silk Road Initiative state its interests in the region, and the projection of the three main powers in the South Caucasus intersects. Although the European Union's Eastern Partnership project has not fully achieved its goals, all three countries are interested in EU integration. Russia's historical and cultural proximity, as well as its long-term regional hegemony, continue to impact all three states. Georgia has completely distanced itself from Russia's Eurasian Economic Union, and although Armenia is a member of this Union, it continues to seek to be part of the European Union and China's Silk Road initiative, while Azerbaijan prefers a balanced policy with all three powers. China is later included in the projection of power in the region, has slowly but steadily continued to emerge as an important player in the embattled region by using geopolitical tensions. In particular, China and the independent states in the South Caucasus have established mutually beneficial partnerships, especially in terms of trade. China is unlikely to become a major factor in regional geopolitics, preferring to keep its interests strictly at the commercial level.

### **PANEL 3: CHANGING SOCIETIES OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS.**

**CHAIR: DR. SONA BALASANYAN**

*CRRC-Armenia*

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**LANA GVINJILIA**

*Illia State University (Tbilisi, Georgia)*

### **Moral Comfort and Efficiency of Civil Activism in Contemporary Georgia.**

The building of a democratic state in Georgia started almost 30 years ago by now is still a vibrant and challenging process. The contemporary political theory sees civil society and civic participation as its crucial component. Civility, citizenship, civil activism, and inclusion started growth together with the young Georgian state, even more than the state institutions had to commence from scratch. Passed its many stages, civil society in Georgia may play a much more important role for the state building and stability

that it may be seen from 10 years ago. Modernization and conceptual change of communication channels irreversibly modified the public sphere and moved it online, thus converting many of early basic principles and determinants.

Research findings show that online media and social networks pushed civil activism in Georgia significantly during the last ten years while exposed several limitations. For example, despite the young generation being more active in social networks, and since 2017 easily goes out from online to real-life street actions, their basic political activism like voting in elections is steadily declining (official data from [cec.gov.ge](http://cec.gov.ge)).

As it is proven that political participation in Georgia is inconsistent and unstable, and one of the main reasons for this is lag is fragmented civil society, which lacks methods of consequent actions from the start to the end. Internet and social networks give civil society open public space and a variety of free tools of mobilization, solidarity, demonstration, and fundraising. But often, dilemma of the moral comfort of activist versus efficiency of actions arise in media and society.

The article looks into understanding of democracy and their role in the process by civil activists, where is a right balance between “right” and “efficient” forms of protest. Based on in-depth interviews with leaders and participants of the protest of last five years and the experts, secondary data from CRRRC researches about the perception of NGOs and political activism in the society, the article discusses the dilemma of moral comfort and efficiency of activism in contemporary Georgia.

### **JESSICA GOSLING**

*University College London (United Kingdom)*

### **ELENE TOIDZE**

*Creative Georgia (Tbilisi)*

### **ANI VASHAKMADZE**

*Business and Technology University (Tbilisi, Georgia)*

### **Propelled Towards Prosperity: the Case of the Creative Economy in Georgia.**

The creative economy is a set of practices that includes some of the oldest in history as well as some that have only recently emerged as a result of digital technology. It is, at its core, a set of interconnected activities that turn ideas into cultural services and goods whose value is determined by intellectual property. This sector's

scope is broad, encompassing both informal and formal works and spanning a variety of industries, and remains one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. It is therefore more important than ever to understand the impacts such a sector can have on a country like Georgia.

According to estimates, the current division of labour between humans, computers, and algorithms will generate 133 million new jobs by 2022. Digital skills, as well as entrepreneurial skills, are crucial in the digital economy. Both are essential for success in the creative economy, which is disrupting conventional work nodes. Both are essential for success in the creative economy, which is disrupting conventional work nodes. "It's easy to see how the creative economy will affect any aspect of society. Through this paper, we seek to examine the role that the creative economy has in prosperity within the context of Georgia.

### **FRANZISKA SMOLNIK**

*German Institute for International and Security Affairs – SWP (Berlin)*

### **SUSANNE FEHLINGS**

*Frobenius Institute for Research in Cultural Anthropology (Frankfurt am Main, Germany)*

### **ANDREA WEISS**

*Istanbul Policy Center*

### **Connectivity, Remoteness and Disconnection in and around the Caucasus and Eastern Black Sea Region(s).**

In widely endorsed national narratives – often translated or employed in national development projects and foreign policy – Caucasian countries pride themselves as crossroads of global (geostrategic) importance, while in economic terms, they play the role of a remote backwater for global economic centers rather. Yet, remoteness, including (attributed) global connection, is in itself a social and political process and forms part of a field of power. In historical terms, the local has been the product of local-regional-global articulations even before globalization became a prominent discursive strand. Violent confrontations around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that have recently flared up anew, as well as SARS-CoV-2 seem to highlight the vulnerability of connectivity and the disconnection that conflict and a pandemic produce. Equally, the overall low degree of regional economic integration, as reflected in macro-economic data and de-facto border regimes of the wider Caucasus area, seems

to confirm this image. Yet, disconnection also constitutes a relation, and likewise, lack of connection in itself should be considered a particular type of connectivity. Not only, but also for the ways in which disconnection shapes alternative linkages.

This paper aims to sketch a novel conceptual approach to study empirically and ethnographically ambivalent sets of relations of various scales that constitute connectivity in the wider Caucasus area. A focus on unevenness, or more broadly speaking, power configurations, as well as historicity, considering continuities as well as ruptures, and an emphasis on process form crucial elements of this conceptual approach. The paper's authors aim to critically tackle glossy grand narratives about the region as well as underlying dichotomous understandings of power, remoteness, and connection. In particular, the authors draw on ideas of how seemingly remote places are connected to faraway places in unexpected ways through scalar politics. Taking into account how the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the current, resumed armed confrontation around Nagorno-Karabakh, has started to reshape connectivity, the authors draw on small-scale trade, infrastructure, and tourism as three empirical fields in order to sketch their conceptual approach.

#### **PANEL 4: PROSPECTS OF CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS**

**CHAIR: DR. GURANDA BURSULAIA**

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**CLAUDIA DITEL**

*Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz (Austria)*

##### **Peacebuilding in Nagorno-Karabakh: A Gender Perspective.**

The process of securitization in Armenia and Azerbaijan has led to the establishment of hybrid democracies, which made the military sphere the cornerstone of the political and economic system. As argued by the feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe, militarization consists in the "diffusion of military ideas into popular culture and into social workings." Militarised social democracies are characterised by the notable transfer of funds in the military apparatus, while militarist ideals also poured out on women in the form of a patriarchal society, affecting women's rights, especially in

wartime. Drawing from their personal experiences of the war and militarist society, some women are building a counter-narrative, which deconstructs the social patterns of patriarchy and war and constitutes a potential glue for cross-ethnic dialogues and a potential base for the establishment of communities in practices between the two communities. That is relevant, especially in the current post-conflict scenario, where bottom-up peacebuilding projects assessing humanitarian issues should be implemented to boost the dialogue and cooperation between the two communities. However, the governments' authoritarian conflict management has generated two crystallised societies so far, which are likely to show again antagonism in the next decade, once the reconstruction process is completed and displaced people will be allowed to return to their territories. Moreover, all of this happens at the expense of humanitarian aspects, including women's security, as many governmental projects lack a gender-sensitive dimension.

It is the right time to prioritize women's narratives in cross-border projects to fulfill the gaps in humanitarian assistance, prepare the population for coexistence, and empower women. The innovative aspect of my PhD research consists of looking at the conflict under a humanitarian and critical-constructivist gender perspective and drawing from learning theory approaches to promote a successful localization of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the post-conflict scenario. My research methodology utilizes oral history and grounded theory to analyse women's stories of resistance vis-à-vis the conflict's masculine narrative and aims to envisage innovative approaches for constructing peace in the South Caucasus.

**JAVADBAY KHALILZADA**

*Kent State University (United States)*

##### **The Ethos of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict: Socio-Psychological analyzes of obstacles to peace in Karabakh Conflict.**

The second stage of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict ended with a trilateral deal between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia on November 10th 2020 that continued since September 27th. There were ongoing negotiations between parties that have not been effective in resolving the conflict and end hostility between the two nations. In contrast, the second war exacerbated ongoing tensions, dehumanization, and inter-ethnic hatred

discourse between two societies that existed for more than thirty years. Using Bar-Tal's ethos of conflict theory, the paper explores Armenians Azerbaijanis inter-ethnic hatred discourse, constructed narratives, and disclose socio-psychological hindrances to the peace and reconciliation between the two nations. The paper highlights that these constructed perceptions of the other, victimhood narratives, and populism prevent conflict from being resolved and breed enmity.

### **NONA SHAHNAZARIAN**

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#### **The Role of Nagorno-Karabakh Civil Society: Life Under the New Status Quo.**

Based on field research on the ground in Nagorno-Karabakh, I dig into the political and social situation and lived experiences of the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh in the aftermath of the 2020 war. As a member of the civic movement "Im Iravunqy," I aim to scrutinize a turbulent and complex method of participant observation and self-ethnography, which have become possible in the course of the longitudinal fieldwork in Nagorno-Karabakh from March 31st to September 21st 2020. Since December 2020, I have been visiting the region virtually every month.

The 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh has reshaped the regional security landscape in the South Caucasus. The previous status quo that has prevailed for the last 25 years following the Armenian military victory of 1994 has been overthrown altogether with a crushing defeat for Armenia and the emergence of new actors in the region. That is to say that the war has reshaped regional power relations in the South Caucasus, bringing in new actors – Turkey and Russian peacekeepers – and obliterating others – the Minsk group.

Contrary to most other de facto states, Nagorno-Karabakh has been able to constitute quite sustainable and functional state institutions and has achieved a significant level of political autonomy. While not being a consolidated democracy or fully free (Freedom House ranked NK as partly free in 2020), it has allowed for the development of a small but active civil society. The civil society and opposition groups have intensified their activities twice over the last years. In 2016, after the Four Day War when a number of

opposition leaders sounded the alarm on the unpreparedness of the Armenian army and on the dramatic disbalance between the Azeri and Armenian military capacities, calling for reforms of the army and condemning the rampant corruption of the elites. The second time was after the 2018 Velvet revolution in Armenia. The prospect of a similar development in NK has intensified the activities of opposition groups who eventually got deceived by Arayik Harutyunyan, with the marked support of Nikol Pashinyan. These last elections have been largely described as fraudulent by the opposition. Just months before the war, there have been unprecedented mobilizations in Stepanakert against the President and the ruling elites, with the closing of roads and numerous demonstrations.

The main criticisms targeted the systems of widespread and structural corruption, patron-clientelism, criminality and theft of public resources as well as abuse of power by the military. After the 2020 war, this momentum did not vanish, and the government is under much heavier pressure now from the population than before.

### **NAMIG ABBASOV**

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### **CEYHUN MAHMUDLU**

*Cornell University (United States)*

#### **War Recurrence, Ceasefire, and Offense-defense Balance.**

The war between Azerbaijan and Armenia recurred on September 27th, 2020, in the most intense level since the 1994 Russian-brokered ceasefire. Although the sides agreed to a peace truce in Moscow on October 7th, 2020, the ceasefire agreement did not even stop the war this time. By contrast, the war in Transnistria between pro-Moldovan forces and pro-Transnistria forces has not recurred since a Russian-brokered ceasefire was signed in 1992. This leads us to ask the following research question with potentially broader implications for other wars: Why do some ceasefire-ended wars recur while others do not? Two gaps in the literature motivate our research question. First, the existing literature has generally ignored the relationship between a ceasefire and the probability of war recurrence. Scholars primarily focus on explaining the causal factors between military victory and negotiated settlement and war recurrence. The "existing literature conflates ceasefires and peace agreements into a single phenomenon" usually

under the negotiated settlement, although “peace agreements and ceasefires generate different post-conflict environments.” The factors such as militarization, arms race, intense security dilemma, and military innovations, which increase the likelihood of war recurrence, are more likely to occur in post-war environments after ceasefire rather than after peace agreements. Second, the existing literature has primarily explored war recurrence at the aggregate level by explaining the resumption of war based on different outcomes, including negotiated settlement and a rebel or government side military victory. The studies have generally argued that the wars that ended with a military victory or negotiated settlement are less likely to recur. The universe of the cases in these studies is usually all wars. However, there are also variations within each of these outcomes as well. These variations are less studied in the literature. In this study, we address these two gaps and disaggregate the outcomes of civil wars and explore the recurrence of the wars that ended with a ceasefire separate from military settlement or negotiated settlement. We primarily ask why some ceasefire-ended wars recur while other ceasefire-ended wars do not. We argue that changes in offense-defense balance lead to the recurrence of ceasefire-ended wars while consistency in the balance continuation of peace. We agree with the previous research that “the basic logic of offense-defense theory requires a ‘broad’ approach to operationalizing the offense-defense balance” and therefore adopt a broad approach to operationalize and measure offense-defense balance. The factors we use to measure offense-defense balance are military technology, the size of military force, nationalism, and the nature of alliances. We qualitatively test the applicability of this argument against the war recurrence in the Nagorno-Karabakh area and the continuation of peace in Transnistria. Although both conflicts are located in a similar geographical security environment, war recurred several times in Nagorno-Karabakh while peace has been continuing in Transnistria. This paper addresses this empirical puzzle and explores why offense-defense balance changed in Nagorno-Karabakh but not in Transnistria.



