

CAUCASUS RESEARCH RESOURCE CENTERS
THE 9TH ANNUAL CRRC CONFERENCE

**NEW FRONTIERS:
THE SOUTH CAUCASUS
AMIDST NEW CHALLENGES**

JUNE 22-23, 2023
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The 9th Annual CRRC Conference

New Frontiers: The South Caucasus Amidst New Challenges

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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, crrc.az and crrc.ge.

ABOUT CAUCASUS BAROMETER

The Caucasus Barometer is a bi-annual nationwide household survey conducted by CRRC offices in the South Caucasus. 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.

SESSION A1: VALUES, MOBILIZATION AND ACTIVISM IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

SULTAN ERBAŞ SADAKA

Middle East Technical University

The Devastating Effects of Turkey's Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and the Shrinking Civic Space in Azerbaijan

I will discuss how the feminist movement in Azerbaijan was affected by Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention alongside the closing civic space in both countries. Repressive policies over activists as well as restriction over regulations and practice has been gradually shrinking within civic spaces in Azerbaijan. In the CSO Meter Azerbaijan country report, it highlights that civil society in Azerbaijan still operates in a difficult environment, with restrictions on donations from outside the country, heavy reporting requirements, high fines, and legislative and enforcement challenges. Beside historical ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey, the Second Karabakh War made their governments closer than ever. While the politicization of the women's movement and its appearance on the streets as well as its expansion to LGBTQ+ community discomfited Ilham Aliyev, who tried to maintain his support through populist and militarist rhetoric, while Erdoğan decided to withdraw from the convention in 2020, despite being the first country to sign it, in order to satisfy his supporters shifting to the radical right. In Azerbaijan, where violence against women is more visible and talked about day to day, the government is reluctant to discuss the issue in depth, leaving it in a "secondary" sphere. In addition, a rise in national discourse creates a more hostile environment for feminist activists and makes them targets of hate. Despite the autocratic rule of the Aliyev government, it appears as though it is trying to fulfill the minimum requirements within the framework of its balanced policy with the West as tries to

work in cooperation with UN institutions (e.g. a CEDAW signatory.) On the other hand, Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention on the grounds that it is against the Turkish family structure and values makes it difficult for CSOs and activists working in the field of women's rights in Azerbaijan. In Baku, where participation in government policies is lacking, the Aliyev regime is trying to justify its inaction by using the example of Turkey.

Sultan Erbaş Sadaka has been a civil society professional and researcher for over 7 years. She has a BSc in International Relations from the Middle East Technical University (METU) and a MA in Eurasian Studies from METU as well. In her thesis, she examines how closing civic space affected women CSOs after the 2014 crackdown on civil society in Azerbaijan. She has been involved in data collection, mapping and research for desk reviews on system strengthening works in collaboration with UNICEF, INGOs and grassroots NGOs. She is experienced in project management, facilitation and the reporting of FGDs and KIIIs through the utilization of semi-structured questionnaires. She also researches best practices regarding child protection and alternative care systems in order help frontline practitioners, civil society workers, and policy makers.

HANS GUTBROD

Ilia State University

Mapping Wikipedia in the Caucasus - Micro-contributions to Scholarship

In the context of limited scholarly publishing, Wikipedia can be an essential resource. So what do we know about how it is used across the South Caucasus? And what new opportunities might an increased usage offer? This paper will offer a data driven comparison, and argue that education -- in which reform is largely stuck -- can be reinvigorated by focusing more of teaching, especially in higher education on contributing to Wikipedia, rather than students doing homework/writing papers that will never

again be read/used after submission. The paper is based on some pilots in teaching, connects to international research but will also suggest what empirical research could be done to test the broader hypotheses that leave many students disengaged and alienated, and that getting them to capture the knowledge about the world around them would increase motivation.

Hans Gutbrod is an Associate Professor at Ilia State University. He also works as a consultant in policy research, on a broad range of issues, and publishes on politics, ethics, and commemoration. Together with colleagues, Hans led a high-impact campaign to increase the transparency of research funding, Transparify. He previously was the regional director of the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC). Hans has been working in the Caucasus region since 1999 and holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the London School of Economics. He is on Twitter at @HansGutbrod.

HAYK SMBATYAN

CRRC Armenia

Could Karabakh Movement Possibly Not Emerge? Comparative Process Tracing of Sociopolitical Roots of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Prior to the outbreak of the first Nagorno-Karabakh war in 1991, the South Caucasus region had been seeing a gradually amplifying mass mobilization of ethnic Armenians, turning into a civil uprising known as the Karabakh movement. This paper examines the dynamics through which the civic movement evolved into a violent armed conflict, consequently nailing down the groundwork of what is now known to be one of the most intractable conflicts in the post-Soviet region. To trace the processes that translated cross-ethnic relations into mass mobilization, the study builds upon qualitative primary data, coupled with an extensive examination of secondary evidence. The study identifies motivating factors such as economic, political, and socio-cultural horizontal inequalities across ethnic lines as the core drivers of collective grievances. Repressive state measures as well as the Soviet Glasnost and Perestroika policies are observed

as enabling factors further boosting the legitimization of the civic movement claims. This paper subscribes to context-bound approach of studying intractable conflicts, and by addressing the theoretical gap between data on objective inequality and data on perceived inequality, marries local knowledge of rather marginalized conflicts with the wider academic discourse.

Hayk Smbatyan completed his PhD studies in sociology at Yerevan State University in 2022 and is currently awaiting his viva voce examination. He holds a master's degree in peace and conflict studies from Uppsala University. His doctoral thesis explores the socio-psychological foundations and intergroup dynamics of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Having authored a number of research publications in local and international academic journals, Hayk's main research interests include causes and dynamics of armed conflicts, identity and human rights research, and innovative research methodologies. With a research geography covering Armenia, South Caucasus, and the wider post-Soviet region, Hayk is currently Deputy Research Director at the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC)-Armenia Foundation and a lecturer at Yerevan State University, Chair of Theory and History of Sociology.

LIA TSULADZE

Center for Social Sciences; Tbilisi State University

NINO ABZIANIDZE

Center for Social Sciences; Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)

European Integration as Discursive Manipulation: Navigating through media discourses in Georgia

This paper discusses media discourses on European integration in Georgia, analyzed from July 2021 until April 2022. It focuses on the most important events in the EU-Georgia relations within this period, from right-wing groups' attack on the anti-homophobia rally in Tbilisi in July 2021 and the EU's respective responses, to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the Georgian

government's refusal to join the EU's sanctions against Russia. Media discourses have been analyzed in six popular media outlets (TVs and online newspapers) based on Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach (2011, 2015) and Teun van Dijk's sociocognitive approach (2013), and ultimately contextualized within the Foucauldian framework for the analysis of the interrelation between politics and discourse (1991). This research has been implemented within the ongoing Horizon 2020 RIA project entitled "Mediatized EU: Mediatized Discourses on Europeanization and their Representations in Public Perceptions" (2021-2024). The research demonstrates that the media landscape directly reflects a highly polarized political landscape in Georgia, with pro-governmental and pro-opposition media outlets, as well as pro-European and anti-European ones producing contrasting discourse on Georgia's European integration and Europeanization. Various discursive strategies and ideological schemas (Wodak 2011, 2015; van Dijk 2013) are used for such constructions, which represent discursive manipulations aimed at persuading the audience through the legitimizing discourses. Eight major discursive units have been identified that were consistent throughout the analyzed period, comprising of dominant discourses, their adjacent discourses and counter-discourses. The two dominant discursive units address the Georgian government's and oppositions' role in the country's European integration, as well as Russia's interference in this process. Furthermore, Georgian media refers to pragmatic considerations stemming from the country's European integration such as the EU's support of human rights and its financial assistance to Georgia, as well as identity considerations such as the country's belonging to the European family and Georgians' mental Europeanization. Looking at the main actors voicing the above discourses, as well as how they compete to maintain their control over them, it is evident that pro-governmental and pro-opposition media outlets represent two major rivals that use various discursive strategies to promote their own version of reality. As for pro-European and anti-European media outlets, because the latter are not popular in Georgia, anti-European narratives are rather marginal. EU officials' discourses are carefully

selected and strategically used by the analyzed media outlets in support of their own agenda. The research confirms that European integration makes one of the major themes contributing to the political and media polarization in Georgia. Indeed, the discursive "usage of European integration" (Jacquot and Woll 2003) shows how the latter is utilized for discrediting one's own political opponents in Georgia's polarized political and media settings.

Dr. Lia Tsuladze is an Executive Director of Center for Social Sciences and Associate Professor of Sociology at Tbilisi State University. Currently she is leading a Research WP of Horizon 2020 project entitled "Mediated EU: Mediatized Discourses on Europeanization and their Representations in Public Perceptions." The current presentation focuses on the findings of media analysis from this project.

Dr. Nino Abzianidze, a co-author of this presentation, is a senior researcher at Center for Social Sciences and Associate Professor of Political Science at Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA).

NARINE YEGIYAN

University of California Davis

Exploring the Role of Media and Language in Building Resilience at the Time of Traumatic Social Distress

In this study I will report on a mixed method research conducted in Georgia during the COVID pandemic and a few months into the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The focus is on multigenerational communities of Armenians in Tbilisi and Samtskhe-Javakheti. I will report data from CRRC surveys as well as my own in-depth interviews conducted with various families living in these regions. I will illustrate how media and language are employed to aid individuals at three levels; personal, social and economic. I will illustrate that different generations employ different strategies with the media. I will argue that people prioritize their strategies in a way that is idiosyncratic and depends heavily on how they define themselves within their roles as

members of their family, in their social groups, in their national (city/region/country) and professional domain. I will then describe a few emerging strategies that are common across generations when people deal with a life-threatening and/or life-changing event.

Narine Yeghyan, PhD. is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of California, Davis. She began her career as a journalist, has expertise in cognitive information processing and communication, with a specific focus on emotion and memory interaction. She uses self-report, behavioral and physiological measures to understand how we can design effective media messages. She oversees the Dynamic Interactions in Cognition and Emotion (D.I.C.E.) Lab and is the past Chair of the Information Systems Division of the International Communications Association. She is a recipient of the UC Global Affairs grant to promote international research and has spent a 2021/22 academic year in Georgia to study the role of ethnicity in information processing and teach media courses at Tbilisi State University.

SESSION A2: MEASURING VALUES IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

SARA MELKONYAN

CRRC-Armenia

HRACHYA KHLGHATYAN

CRRC-Armenia

LILIT YEZEKYAN

CRRC-Armenia

LOUIS-ALASSANE CASSAIGNARD VIAUD

CRRC-Armenia

The Role of Safety and Security on the Subjective Well-Being of Armenians: Evidence from World Values Survey data

Using data from the World Values Survey Wave 7, this paper looks at basic needs as a major predictor of

subjective well-being. Perceptions of the respondent's economic situation and safety and security are analyzed as components of basic needs. Drawing on previous research, we build a model of basic needs using exploratory factor analysis. The factor analysis outlined five dimensions constituting basic needs (Collective Security, Personal Safety, Financial Well-Being, Future Worries, and Community Connectedness). Using a binomial logistic regression model, we tested the role of each dimension as a predictor of subjective well-being. We control for major demographic variables (age, gender, education level, marital status, and employment status). The results reveal that both community connectedness and perceptions of financial well-being are positively associated with subjective well-being. However, neither personal safety perceptions nor worries regarding a potential war affect subjective well-being significantly. This has important theoretical implications as it suggests that, over time, adaptive coping strategies and mechanisms develop in a society that helps to protect its citizens' well-being. This finding is consistent with similar findings regarding interpersonal violence or civil war. Nonetheless, the paper makes a unique theoretical contribution by replicating the finding in the context of an international conflict.

Sara Melkonyan currently works at CRRC-Armenia as a Research and Development Officer and holds a Master's Degree in Political Science and International Affairs from the American University of Armenia. Previously, she was engaged in CRRC-Armenia's activities as an Independent Researcher and has been involved in project-based activities collaborating with national and international organizations on different social-political issues of the country and the region. Her research interests include Comparative Studies on Politics and Local Government, Public Policy, and Administration.

Hrachya Khlgatyan is a junior quantitative research analyst in CRRC-Armenia, and holds an MA degree in Macroeconomic analysis.

Lilit Yezekyan is CRRC-Armenia's Research Director since April 2021. Before joining CRRC-Armenia, she worked for more than ten years at the Central Bank of Armenia as an

economist-analyst and economist-statistician. Before that, she worked in a variety of administrative and economic-policy related roles at the Armenian-European Policy and Legal Advice Center (AEPLAC) from 2004-2009. She is currently studying for a Master's in Statistics and Information Management (data science) at the NOVA Information Management School and has taken part in a number of international trainings and educational programs including the Public Policy and Public Administration executive program at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in the US.

Louis-Alassane Cassaignard-Viaud is a Senior Research Analyst at CRRC-Armenia since 2022. Previously Louis-Alassane worked as a research assistant at the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies of Uppsala University (Sweden). Louis-Alassane holds a MSc in Peace and Conflict Studies from Uppsala University, and a B.A in European Studies from Maastricht University (the Netherlands). His academic interests are largely centered around the study of peace, conflict and its resolution combining methodologies and approaches from sociology, political science, and psychology.

ELENE KVANCHILASHVILI

Tbilisi State University

Political Psychology of Euro-Integration - Which Values Matter?

On the background of Russia's current war in Ukraine, Georgia has never been closer to its European integration goals. This paper views integration as the process of readiness of the country to embrace European values. Based on the World Value Survey, it analyzes Georgia's place on the World Culture Map and the trajectory that the country has taken over the years. The paper attempts to answer three main questions: (i) Which values are common to the EU countries? (ii) Which values drive Georgia? (iii) Which values are important to nurture and sustain a fully functioning democracy? The last question is important because currently Georgia faces the important process of gaining EU candidate country status and all 12 points set as

predispositions for this status serve one aim – for Georgia to have a functioning democracy. An interesting fact here is that scientific research on European Integration through the lens of political psychology is quite rare. For example, two of the most prominent journals – Political Psychology and The Journal of Common Market Studies have only a limited number of studies regarding political psychology and European Integration (Journal of Common Market Studies is being published since 60s and Political Psychology has been out since 70s). The Inglehart–Welzel Cultural Map analyzed in this paper presents the empirical evidence of massive cultural change and the persistence of distinctive cultural traditions. The map by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel asserts that there are two major dimensions of cross-cultural variation in the world: (i) Traditional values versus secular-rational values and (ii) Survival values versus values of self-expression. The main thesis holds that socioeconomic development is linked with a broad syndrome of distinctive value orientations (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). The paper links WVS findings with recent studies of NDI, IRI, CRRC. These studies are not only a good indicator of public opinion on various subjects within the Georgian society but sometimes also play an important role in shaping the political agenda. The main value of this paper is in its attempt to push the topic of Georgia's readiness for European Integration into a more scientific dimension – focusing on attitudes and values rather than leaving it to politics.

Elene Kvanchilashvili, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences holds a degree of Ph.D. in Psychology from Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU). Kvanchilashvili has been enrolled in psychology for more than 10 years, focusing mainly on the psychology of political and mass communication. Her PhD in psychology covered nationalism comparing three countries of South Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Her brochure – Nationalism in South Caucasus: Personal and Group Aspects was published in 2008. In 2011, she was a Carnegie Fellow at Berkeley University, CA, USA. Kvanchilashvili serves as a Co-

Founder of the Master's Program in Social Influences and Communication at TSU.

ULKAR ASGAROVA

Azerbaijan University of Languages

The Impact of the Ukraine-Russia and Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflicts on Azerbaijan's Own Identity Formation

The intersection of culture, values, and identity is a complex and multifaceted issue that impacts societies in different ways, including during conflicts. In the context of the Ukraine-Russia and Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts, the cultural, social and historical roots are intertwined. This paper begins by examining the role of cultural and historical narratives in shaping Azerbaijani attitudes towards the Ukraine-Russia and Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts, focusing on how these narratives have contributed to the shaping of Azerbaijan's national identity. It then examines the ways in which these conflicts have impacted Azerbaijani civil society, including NGO's, media and other actors, and the role that civil society has played in promoting a particular vision of Azerbaijani identity in response to these conflicts. One key aspect of the paper is an examination of how the conflict has led to changes in the use and perception of the Azerbaijani language. For instance, how the conflict has affected attitudes towards the language among different segments of Azerbaijani society. The conflict and the war has had a significant impact on the formation of Azerbaijani national identity and language policy in the country. The war has led to a renewed sense of Azerbaijani national identity and language policy in the country. The paper also examines the role of language policy in shaping national identity in the context of Ukraine-Russia and Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts, including the policies pursued by the Azerbaijan government in relation to the Azerbaijani language. By examining the impact of these conflicts on the Azerbaijani language, the paper seeks to provide insight into the complex interplay between external and internal identity formation in the context of national conflict. It explores how these conflicts have influenced Azerbaijani attitudes

towards identity formation, drawing on a range of primary and secondary sources.

Ulkar Asgarova is a PhD candidate at the Azerbaijan University of Languages in World Literature and has 14 years of teaching experience. She is a lecturer at different universities in Baku. She has published extensively as an author and co-author in many journals. She frequently speaks at international conferences. Currently she is working on two papers related to the formation of national identity.

LOUIS-ALASSANE CASSAIGNARD VIAUD

CRRC-Armenia

HRACHYA KHLGHATYAN

CRRC-Armenia

MANE GASPARYAN

CRRC-Armenia

SONA BALASANYAN

CRRC-Armenia

Introducing the Caucasus Barometer Datasets

Polls can make a useful contribution to social sciences (Bourdieu, 1972) and have become an important tool in the social sciences (Lagos and Chu, 2013). Since the 1990s a specific type of poll has become prominent: international public opinion barometers (surveys) have developed (the Eurobarometer, Latinobarometer, Afrobarometer, Asiabarometer). All over the world they are used to measure people's opinion using a unique questionnaire across several countries and several years. Unfortunately, until recently none of these barometers covered the South Caucasus region. This gap was addressed by the creation of the Caucasus Barometer (CB) which collects public opinion data in Georgia, Armenia, and, until 2013, Azerbaijan. Akin to other barometers, it allows for cross-country and longitudinal analysis and covers similar issues. CB bi-annually measures attitudes, values, and perceptions on various topics such as foreign affairs, institutions, internet and media. Furthermore, additional questions are added in

each wave to capture perceptions on country specific events. This paper presents the CB since 2013 with a particular focus on Armenia and aims to facilitate the use of CB for academics, journalists, and the general public. To do so, it presents what CB contains, how the data was collected, how it has been used so far by academics and the broader public, and how it could be used in the future. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of how this data can be compared to, and used in conjunction with, similar barometers across the globe. We argue that the Caucasus Barometer, by providing time-series and cross-country data, is an invaluable resource for all those interested in the (study of) the South Caucasus.

Louis-Alassane Cassaignard-Viaud is a Senior Research Analyst at CRRC-Armenia since 2022. Previously Louis-Alassane worked as a research assistant at the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies of Uppsala University (Sweden). Louis-Alassane holds a MsC in Peace and Conflict Studies from Uppsala University, and a B.A in European Studies from Maastricht University (Netherlands). His academic interests are largely centered on the study of peace, conflict and its resolution combining methodologies and approaches from sociology, political science, and psychology.

Hrachya Khlghatyan is a junior quantitative research analyst in CRRC-Armenia, and holds an MA degree in Macroeconomic analysis.

Mane Gasparyan was an Intern at CRRC-Armenia for three months during 2021 and now holds the position of Administrative Assistant since March 2022. Prior to joining CRRC she worked at an IT company as a Data Entry Specialist. She holds a bachelor's degree from the Faculty of International Relations. She completed her master's in International Relations at the China Foreign Affairs University. She is also actively engaged in research activities and projects implemented by CRRC-Armenia.

Sona Balasanyan is currently the CEO of CRRC-Armenia Foundation. She holds an MA (2009) and PhD (2012) in Sociology from the Yerevan State University (YSU), as well as MSc in Education (Research Design and Methodology) from the University of Oxford, Department of Education,

UK (2015). During her time in the UK, she completed an internship at the Oxford Learning Institute. Since 2010, as an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, YSU, Dr. Balasanyan has delivered a series of courses (including Media Text Analysis, Evaluation Methodologies, and Mixed Methods Research). She was involved in project-based activities collaborating with national and international organizations among which the US Department of State, UNDP, CRRC-Armenia, Open Society Foundation, State Committee of Science and Scientific Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (the Matenadaran). Sona was a Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung scholarship holder, an AGBU scholar and is a Luys alumna. She has authored three books (in Armenian), articles, essays and analytical reports.

SESSION B1: PATTERNS OF MIGRATION FROM AND TO THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

ANTÓNIO EDUARDO MENDONÇA

IGOT - Universidade de Lisboa

Georgian Migrants in Peniche, Portugal: The Covid-19 Pandemic and the war in Ukraine

This paper aims to present the life stories of several Georgian migrants who left their native country in the late 90's / beginning of the new millennium and migrated to a small coastal town in Portugal, Peniche. Based on semi-structured interviews completed before the the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2018 and 2019, complemented by a recent follow-up, and also on ethnographic observations in different contexts. The paper attempts to follow individual migrants and families since their departure from the Caucasus - to the struggles and issues of their integration into Portuguese society. It pays special attention to two questions: how their ethnic and national identities were redefined or reshaped during the process, and how the relation to other post-soviet immigrant communities changed during these years. The most recent contacts with these families also aimed at understanding how two events - first the Covid-19 pandemic, then the war in Ukraine - changed their perceptions and expectations in the middle

and long term, namely those related to permanence in Portugal, returning to Georgia, or additional migration to different countries.

Antonio Eduardo Menonca is a Portuguese senior anthropologist, researcher at the IGOT - Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning of the University of Lisbon) in the field of Post-soviet Migrations. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, he organized two International Conferences on Post-Soviet Diaspora(s) in Western Europe (Lisboa-Estoril, 2017, and Vila Franca, 2019) and one on Central Asian Migrants in Western Europe (Lagoa-Algarve, 2020); a new conference is planned for 2024, with a slightly different title and scope. He was also the convenor of an Iberian Conference on Imigrantes de Leste / Inmigrantes del Este (Castelo de Vide, 2019). Previously, he taught at the Universities of the Algarve and Lusófona, in Portugal, and of Ankara, in Turkiye (as lecturer of the Instituto Camões/ Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs); and at the School of Heritage Sciences of Lisbon.

JOSIAH MARINEAU

University of North Carolina at Pembroke

BRANDON HICKS

University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Russian Dissidents in Georgia: The New White Russians?

Following the 24 February invasion of Ukraine by the Russia, an estimated 30,000 Russians fled their own country to take refuge in Georgia. The arrival of Russians in large numbers, however, did not go unnoticed by many in Georgia, 20% of which continues to be occupied by the Russia.. These events prompt the following questions: Why did Russians choose to flee their country? and what has been their reception in Georgia by the government and general populace? To begin to answer these questions, I conducted in-depth interviews with Russian dissidents, members of Georgian civil society, and representatives of Russian humanitarian organizations. The argument of this paper is that the current wave of Russian migrants is tacitly

accepted by the Georgian government, even if the Georgian populace is more opposed to their presence.

Josiah Marineau is an associate professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. He studies international relations of the South Caucasus region, in particular the effect of the Russo-Ukrainian war on the region. He also has experience studying, traveling, and publishing on sub-Saharan Africa.

Brandon Hicks graduated from Appalachian State University with a Bachelor's in Psychology and from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke with a Master's in Public Administration. Specializing in non-profit organizations, Brandon has assisted several non-profits with various administrative functions.

ANA KHARSHILADZE

Center for Progress

ANNA DOLIDZE

Center for Progress

Challenges and Support for Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia

After the Russian Federation initiated their military offensive on 24 February 2022, millions of refugees fled Ukraine and were displaced within the country. Many were forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries. As a result, more than 160,000 Ukrainians arrived in Georgia. Although we lack official data on the migration of Ukrainian refugees, based on the most recent information, around 25,000 Ukrainians are still residing in the country. Reports state that many refugees have been uncertain about their future plans, while others have encountered difficulties while seeking assistance. The government of Georgia launched a social-economic program in 2022 while local NGOs also offered and provided their assistance to Ukrainian refugees. However, more needs to be done as many Ukrainians have been unable to access financial aid, legal services, and have had to deal with a variety of other issues related to their legal and social status. This paper will be discussing some of the many challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in Georgia in terms

of financial aid, housing, obtaining refugee status, integration into the labor market, and how the issues are being handled within the country.

YASEMIN NECMIYE TUTAR

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University

Unravelling the Epistemic Community: A review on Russian scientists caught up in unprecedented sanctions

The world has noticed systematic and absolute destruction caused by one superpower country. On February 22, 2022, Russia callously invaded Ukraine, breaching all international laws and rules. Following the attack on a peaceful country, the West placed unprecedented sanctions against Putin's war. The sanctions were intended to "paralyze the Russian economy and starve Putin's war machine." However, punishing judgments were also made by important scientific publications such as Elsevier. These publications stated that they will not accept articles submitted by Russian scientists and that their academic collaboration activities would be halted. While this method may appear to be a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is a risky measure that could cause additional issues in the academic community. It is perceived as unethical for the committee to punish Russian scientists by prohibiting them from participation in academic and scientific discourse. Notably, the fundamental principle of impartiality in science was broken in this instance. Thus, it has been seen to infringe on both human and scientific freedoms. Identification and resolution of issues of worldwide importance are made possible by these communities' expanding influence on international policymaking. Using a qualitative method this study investigates the possibility of the epistemic community surrounding this problem. It examines the ideas of epistemic communities and their effects on policymaking highlighting the interplay between structure and its decisions in this environment. The current findings highlight the fundamental assumptions and underpinnings surrounding the current policies and approaches to the prevailing issue. It notices, the restrictions imposed on the Russian scientists are unfounded and require thorough

assessment and consensus from the scientific community. The study concludes by asking a question, "Should Russian scientists face sanctions and boycotts aimed at the Russian Federation?"

Yasemin Necmiye Tutar was born in Isparta, Türkiye. She completed her undergraduate studies at Anadolu University in the Department of Business Administration, master's studies at Izmir Katip Çelebi University in the Department of International Relations on U.S. Middle East Policy, and doctoral studies at Yeditepe University's Department of Political Science and International Relations on Security, Health Security and Securitization in English. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor at Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University within the faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences in the Department of International Relations. She is also an Erasmus coordinator of the university.

SESSION B2: PEACE, SECURITY, AND DEMOCRACY IN THE CAUCASUS

IRINA MAMULASHVILI

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) and Chatham House

Russian Information Warfare Strategy Against Georgia

Since ancient times, information has been considered a crucial component of warfare. Modern media landscapes, evolving communication technologies, and the digital world have increased the importance of information in war. States use information warfare as a tool to achieve their geopolitical objectives. Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 is a vivid example of information warfare where the aggressor state conducts extensive information war against its adversary to establish its own perspective, accuse Georgia of initiating the war, and justify its offensive actions in the eyes of the West. My presentation will analyse the information warfare strategy that Russia employs during armed conflicts to achieve its objectives, with a particular focus on the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. Several essential elements of information warfare will be explored, including propaganda, disinformation

campaigns, and cyberattacks in order to determine the role of information war in this conflict. Furthermore, it will examine how Russia interprets the outbreak of the war, how it damages opponents' images and how the West - Georgia's strategic ally, perceives this conflict. Moreover, parallels will be drawn between information wars conducted by Russia against Georgia and Ukraine to identify the similarities and differences among the approaches taken against countries with a common Soviet past and with similar ambitions to integrate into Western institutions.

Having witnessed the 2008 Russian-Georgian war at a young age, Irina Mamulashvili decided to devote her life to international politics. She holds a BSc degree in International Relations from the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) and an MA degree in Diplomacy and Foreign Policy from the City University of London. She has been awarded a Chevening scholarship by the government of the UK. As part of her master's thesis, she examined Russia's foreign policy towards Georgia from the perspective of Realism and Constructivism. Over the past few years, she has worked in ministries, civil society organizations, embassies and international organizations. She has worked at the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg, participating in strategic communication during the Russia-Ukraine war, as well as granting candidacy status for Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. Furthermore, she worked on a project with an MP in the UK Parliament, the House of Commons, to find legal solutions to confiscate Russian assets and rebuild Ukraine. At present, she is a Program Manager at ISFED and a member of the Common Futures Conversations at Chatham House. In addition, she has authored several policy papers and studies pertaining to EU, UK, foreign policy, and Eastern Europe. Her interests include international relations, international security, foreign policy analysis, Russia's foreign policy, the Black Sea Security, and the external politics of the EU and NATO.

JUSTIN TOMCZYK

Stanford University

Shifts in Personnel Deployment Throughout the Southern Military District Since February 2022

The invasion force mustered prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine is estimated to have been 170,000 soldiers. This force included elements drawn from the Russian National Guard and OMON units from Kursk and Belgorod. By summer 2022 the Russian campaign was heavily dependent on coordination with semi-autonomous armed forces, such as the Chechen "Akhmat" battalions and the Wagner Group. The announcement of a "partial mobilization" in September 2022 and persistent rumors of an additional mobilization suggest that despite popular perceptions of the Russian military having an inexhaustible pool of active and reserve forces to draw upon, Moscow has instead faced a chronic shortage of manpower throughout 2022. In order to overcome this limitation the Russian military has sourced manpower from deployments abroad and garrisons within the Russian Federation. Demographically, this has often included specialists and officers whose current roles are far removed from the grinding rates of attrition seen in the extended urban combat zones of Eastern Ukraine. This paper will examine changes in Russian security posturing in the South Caucasus since February 2022. More specifically, this paper will examine the movement, redeployment, and consolidation of Russian military forces of the Southern Military District since 2022 and what changes are visible in size and force composition of Russian deployments in Abkhazia, Armenia, South Ossetia, and the peacekeeping mission in Nagorno-Karabakh. This paper will draw upon a variety of sources in its analysis, such as formal statements from the Russian Ministry of Defense, reporting from journalists throughout the region, and information triangulated from OSINT sources on the movement and redeployment of forces. The purpose of this study is to provide observers an understanding of how the War in Ukraine is directly impacting Russian security capabilities in the Caucasus and which specific ways Moscow's security footprint in the region has possibly receded.

Justin Tomczyk is a graduate of Stanford University's MA program in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. His research is focused on Russian foreign policy in the

South Caucasus and far-right movements in Eastern Europe. In 2017 he moved to Yerevan, Armenia and studied at the Russian-Armenian Slavonic University as part of a FLAS fellowship. He remained in Armenia through the fall of 2019 working as a researcher covering political violence in Eurasia. He is currently based in Lower Manhattan.

MEHRAJ ALIYEV

Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

From Conflict to Cooperation: The European Union's role in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace talks

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan devastated the region and raised questions about the international community's role in resolving the conflict. Amidst the violence, the European Union (EU) emerged as a key player in the peace negotiations, working alongside the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group and engaging with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. This paper examines the EU's role in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace negotiations, particularly in the stage following the 2020 Karabakh conflict. It reviews the EU's history of involvement in the region and the factors that have shaped its approach to the peace process. It also analyzes the challenges and opportunities presented by the post-2020 context and the EU's response. One of the EU's main strengths has been its longstanding partnership with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The EU has provided financial assistance and political support to these countries, with a focus on democratization, human rights, and economic development. The EU's engagement has helped to build trust and foster dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan, despite their ongoing disputes over Nagorno-Karabakh. However, some challenges have hampered the EU's efforts to broker a lasting peace agreement. Internal divisions among EU member states, Russia's dominant role in the region, and the complex ethnic and geopolitical dynamics in the South Caucasus have all posed significant obstacles to progress. Despite these challenges, the EU has responded to the post-2020 situation with renewed effort and engagement. Following the November 2020 ceasefire

agreement, the EU provided humanitarian aid to the conflict-affected areas and convened a high-level meeting with the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers to discuss the peace process. Moving forward, the EU is likely to continue playing a key role in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace negotiations. To succeed, it will need to build on its existing partnerships. It will also need to navigate the complex international landscape and balance the interests of various regional and global actors. Ultimately, the EU played a crucial role in the post-2020 stage, as the conflict had erupted again, and the situation was dire. The EU was quick to recognize that the fighting had to stop as soon as possible, as it was causing undue suffering to the people. To aid in resolving the conflict, the EU supported the ceasefire agreement that was signed between Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia in November 2020. The EU's role in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process will be critical in creating a lasting and sustainable peace in the South Caucasus. By leveraging its partnerships and engaging with all stakeholders, the EU can help to foster a more stable and prosperous future for the region.

Mehraj Aliyev is an Independent Research Associate at the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center (REEC) of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, IL, USA (through the SRL Program of the REEC, which the US Department of State generously supports). Mr. Aliyev brings extensive experience in international cooperation and development to his research, having worked as an International Aid & Cooperation Officer for the European Commission in Azerbaijan. His research interests are primarily focused on the European Union Foreign Policy, and the policies of the European Union towards the South Caucasus, with a particular emphasis on conflict resolution, democratization & human rights and energy security in the region.

TIGRAN MELIKIAN

CRRC-Armenia

SEDA ANANYAN

CRRC-Armenia

Democracy and Corruption: Benefits of an intersectional approach

In the move towards democracy, and mostly since the 'velvet revolution' in 2018, Armenia had a new phase of anti-corruption efforts to address and promote transparency and accountability, by pushing new, legislative reforms, institutional changes, and anti-corruption measures, as well as promoting engagement from civil society, the private sector and international partners. However, an intersectional approach that could potentially link current Armenian democracy challenges such as gender inequality and social exclusion with corruption, while acknowledging the interconnectedness between them, has not yet been made. With the new democratic governance development plan, in cooperation with the European Union (EU), the question arises which opportunities there are to effectively use such an approach for future policies with the aim of improving those democracy challenges. Followed by that, this paper uses data gathered by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) Armenia, through a qualitative method of focus group discussions, and quantitative data gathered through face-to-face survey interviews. The quantitative data (n=1520) focused on public perceptions on corruption in Armenia, its anti-corruption activities, and individual behaviour towards (anti-)corruption. In addition, the focus group discussions were held with representatives of governmental bodies, civil society organisations, and the private sector and focussed on corruption and gender (in)equality and social in- and/or exclusion. Based on the mixed-methods approach, including analyzing current policies and implementations of anti-corruption reforms, gender equality and social inclusion, combined with a literature review, the following conclusion is summarized: Armenia has made significant efforts in the past years to combat corruption. However, an inclusive and intersectional approach that considers the specific needs and perspectives of women and marginalized groups is essential to fight corruption and build a more equitable and just society. To continue the progress, Armenia requires keeping political will, institutional effectiveness, transparency, and accountability, considering

sociocultural factors, international cooperation, capacity building, and public awareness and participation. Overcoming current challenges requires sustained efforts, commitment, and collaboration among various stakeholders, such as the government, civil society, private sector, and citizens, to effectively address corruption while promoting gender equality and social inclusion. Facing these results, in this paper we discuss the case for engaged scholarship as an opportunity to include academics as stakeholders, and therefore this paper contributes to new ways of approaching anti-corruption efforts in Armenia using an intersectional lens.

Tigran Melikian finished his Masters degree in Sociology in Amsterdam, and came to Armenia for a new adventure. In his desire to volunteer in Armenia, coming from the diaspora, he was lucky to fulfill this interest at CRRC-Armenia. His goal is to learn about Armenian society, its struggles and opportunities, and hopes to make some contribution as well.

Roundtable Discussion: Archival Access and Openness in the Caucasus and Eurasia

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing geopolitical shifts have had significant consequences for archival access and historical research in the former Soviet space, seemingly a return to some extent to restrictions reminiscent of those during the Cold War. One approach to dealing with these obstacles is through seeking, cultivating, and sharing digital collections. Another is to transition to using primary sources in republics where archives are more accessible. Yet even here there are continuing obstacles to archival openness and areas for improvement, such as arbitrary decisions about access, lack of sharing of best practices in providing services for users, shortcomings in cataloguing and finding aids, and insufficient resources for digitalization. This hybrid roundtable will bring together experienced researchers and archival openness advocates to discuss their recent experiences with working in archives in the region, as well as the challenges and potential solutions for encouraging greater archival openness and accessibility.

Timothy K. Blauvelt is a Professor of Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies at Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia, and is also Regional Director for the South Caucasus for American Councils for International Education. He has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and is the co-editor (with Jeremy Smith) of *Georgia after Stalin: Nationalism and Soviet power* published by Routledge in 2016 and (with Adrian Brisku) of *The Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic of 1918: Federal Aspirations, Geopolitics and National Projects* published by Routledge in 2021. His monograph *Clientelism and Nationality in an Early Soviet Fiefdom: The Trials of Nestor Lakoba* was also published by Routledge in 2021.

Anton Vatcharadze heads the Memory and Disinformation Studies Direction at IDFI, which he joined in 2017. Also he coordinates the project titled *Enhancing Openness of State Archives in Former Soviet Republics and Eastern Bloc Countries*. Anton is a historian by training and has earned his Bachelor and Master's Degrees from Tbilisi State University. Since 2009, Anton has worked at the National Archive of Georgia. In 2012-2017, he was the director of the Central Historical Archive. During this period, Anton took part in projects implemented by the National Archive and various non-governmental organizations: including many projects concerning the study of the history and sources of Georgia's first democratic republic, as well as popularization of this period in schools and among students. Three of these projects involved the study of archival documents related to Abkhazia and Samachablo and ensuring their public accessibility. Anton Vatcharadze is the author of several articles on a history and memory. He has edited number of scientific-popular books.

Catriona Kelly is Senior Research Fellow in Russian and Soviet Culture at Trinity College Cambridge and Honorary Professor at the University of Cambridge. She is the author of many books, most recently *Soviet Art House: Lenfilm Studio under Brezhnev*, and is currently working on a history of Soviet films about the past, 1956-1991, which includes Georgian cinema.

Harrison King is a historian working on history of empires and colonialism in the 19th century, particularly on Muslim peripheries of the empires. Currently Harrison is affiliated with the Institute of Oriental studies, Ilia State University. Harrison King's ongoing research is focused on Tsarist imperial policy in the Caucasus within a global context.

Aram Ghoogasian is a PhD candidate in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. His dissertation deals with transformations in Armenian print culture in the Ottoman and Russian empires in the mid-nineteenth century. His past work has covered Armeno-Turkish cultural production, Armenian-American literature, and the racialization of Armenians in the United States.

DR. CLAIRE P. KAISER

Adjunct Professor at the Center for Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies at Georgetown University, McLarty Associates.

Keynote speech: Rethinking Soviet nation-building in the Caucasus: new frames, new legacies.

Claire P. Kaiser is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University's Center for Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies and head of strategy for McLarty Associates, a Washington-based global strategy firm. She is the author of *Georgian and Soviet: Entitled Nationhood and the Specter of Stalin in the Caucasus* (Cornell UP, 2023). She has also contributed to edited volumes on Georgian nationalism and empire in the Soviet periphery. Dr. Kaiser has been an instructor at the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute and served as an election observer for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in missions to Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. She earned a PhD in modern Russian and Soviet history at the University of Pennsylvania; and an MA in Eurasian, Russian, and Eastern European studies and a BS in foreign service from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. She is a term member of the Council of Foreign Relations and speaks Russian and Georgian

SESSION C: NEW ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHIES OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

RATI SHUBLADZE

Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)

ZAKARIA TAVBERIDZE

Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA)

Affordable Housing and Access to Higher Education: Where and how do students from the regions live in Tbilisi?

In recent years, and especially after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the cost of housing in Tbilisi has increased. This has created a major challenge for students from different regions of Georgia who study in Tbilisi and currently, many are struggling to find affordable accommodations in the capital. In May 2022, this issue sparked student protests as they have been demanding affordable student accommodations from the government and public universities. The issue of students' access to affordable housing in Tbilisi is one of the main concerns that can potentially negatively impact students' educational attainment. When it comes to access to high education, there had been existing inequality between students from the capital and from regions. Currently, there is a risk that this gap might be increased. On this note, the main objective of our research project is to investigate the effects of students' access to housing on their ability to access education in Tbilisi. To achieve the above objective, the following research questions are guiding the study: 1) What are the main challenges related to housing and accommodation for regional students in Tbilisi? 2) Where, in what conditions, and with whom do regional students live in Tbilisi? Do they have access to basic infrastructural facilities - such as heating, clean water, toilet, kitchen, learning space, and private room? 3) What is the impact of inadequate housing on students' academic performance, employment, health, and overall well-being? This research utilizes a mixed-methods approach to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. In the first stage, expert interviews were conducted with established specialists in high education, and the data has been used in designing research instruments for ongoing in-depth interviews and surveys. In the second stage, the target population is regional students from various universities in Tbilisi who are currently residing in the city. Data has been collected through the following methods: a) Online survey: A questionnaire was developed and shared on social media and different online media platforms to reach as many regional students as possible. The quantitative data will not be representative of the target population, but it will be still informative to define main trajectories, tendencies, and trends. b) In-depth interviews: Interviews will be conducted with regional students to discuss their experiences and perspectives related to housing issues in Tbilisi. The sample will be determined using the snowball

sampling method. The expected outcomes of this research include a better understanding of how the cost of housing affects students' ability to access high education in Tbilisi. Also, it will provide insights into the impact of inadequate housing on students' academic performance, employment, health, and general well-being. The outcomes of this study will be valuable for policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders who are involved in addressing the issue of affordable housing for students in Tbilisi.

Rati Shubladze is a researcher with more than ten years of experience carrying out quantitative and qualitative research in Georgia and the South Caucasus. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from Tbilisi State University. Since 2015 he has been teaching at several Georgian universities and is currently affiliated with the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA), serving as the head of the Sociology Program. Rati has a background with public opinion polling organizations, including CRRC-Georgia. Moreover, he has participated in international monitoring and evaluation research projects. Furthermore, he was part of several academic research projects focusing on youth, history, and culture. His academic interests include elections, post-soviet transformation, youth culture, and youth studies.

Zakaria Tavberidze is an academic assistant at the sociology department at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs. His research interests include but are not limited to lifelong learning, community learning, cultural transformations, and conflicts. He holds a master's degree in journalism from the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs, and a second master's degree in Adult Education for Social Change from the University of Glasgow. He has more than ten years of work experience at the leading Georgian and International NGOs, such as transparency international, Internews, Caucasus Research Resource Center, and Mercy Corps. He was also an invited lecturer of sociology at Ilia State University.

FIDAN NAMAZOVA

ADA University

ANAR VALIYEV

ADA University

Localizing Smart Cities in the Post-Soviet Context: Case of Azerbaijan

The smart city concept became very popular term in recent years, especially in countries of post-Soviet Eurasia. Russia, Kazakhstan, and recently Azerbaijan launched processes notoriously dubbed as "smart city/village" development, hoping to solve the current problems of overpopulation, urbanization, and infrastructure

inadequacy with this magic concept. In many cases the initiatives did not bring any breakthrough and failed due to misunderstandings, and mismatch between visions and strategies of implementation. The following article discusses the problems of conceptualization of smart city in Azerbaijan, its implementation as well as challenges associated with it. In 2021 the government of Azerbaijan launched the process of building smart cities and villages in the Karabakh Economic Region. The Government initiated the Great Return program, which envisages systematic measures for the return of IDPs back to their hometowns in the areas now controlled by Azerbaijan. The First State Program on "Great Return," calls for the return of 10,270 families by 2025 and 34,500 families by 2026. Yet, there must be some idea or concept that would attract people to return to these territories and live in better conditions. Thus, the concept of smart city/village were introduced making it a hype term for public administrator. By September 2022 one smart village (Aghali) in Karabakh region was already built and around 300 people were settled there. The village is being developed based on the five 'smart' pillars such as housing, production, social services, agriculture, and sustainable energy, and envisions the use of modern technologies and practices brought in by specialists from China, Turkey, Italy, and Israel. The government plans to build numerous of such villages and cities in this region within next decade. As a result, smart villages in Karabakh are intended to serve to spur migration from urban areas back to rural villages of Karabakh, slow down urbanization, and the rural population of other regions of Azerbaijan would benefit economically. However, the launched smart village is far away from the initial concept and does not follow the principles of data-driven decision-making entity. Thus, there are many challenges in implementation of the project among which is conceptualization of smart city, governance, infrastructure development, and human capital. The following paper will look at problems of the country in implementation of smart city as well as assess the readiness of Azerbaijan to do so

Fidan Namazova is a young professional working as a research associate and an executive assistant to the dean

of the School of Public and International Relations at ADA University. Ms. Namazova has graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Public Affairs and is a Master student of Public Administration in ADA University. She has experience working both in public and international sector focusing on social and educational sphere, international relations as well as project management. Her research area covers public administration, e-governance, smart cities, and EU Affairs.

RUIKAI XUE

Jilin University and Hokkaido University

Pipeline Geopolitics -- Cross-border Energy pipelines in the South Caucasus and Three Countries' Diplomatic Positions toward Russia (2003-2020)

The state's dependence on energy leads to the need for a stable supply of oil and natural gas. As the physical carrier of the international transportation of energy, cross-border pipeline hardly runs in the territory of one country, but crosses several countries through the chain from supplier country to transit country and then to consumer country. It has not only economic significance, but also geopolitical importance due to the regional security environment from the planning and laying of cross-border pipeline. As the hub of Eurasia, the South Caucasus is seen as an east-west corridor to transport energy from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia to Europe. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia play different roles as transit countries in energy transportation in the South Caucasus. Alternative cross-border energy pipelines, including the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) pipelines, have enhanced the diplomatic independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan. Parallel energy pipelines, while promoting regionalization in the South Caucasus, could also create competition with Russia, also the region's energy supplier. As a result of the geopolitical game between major powers and the conflict of regional interests, the cross-border pipeline project in the South Caucasus will be affected by the regional security environment. Therefore, it is necessary to use Russian and English historical materials

and investigation archives to explore how the cross-border energy pipeline shapes the diplomatic positions of the three countries towards Russia under the background of the security environment in the South Caucasus, including the complex state of neutrality, anti-Russia and pro-Russian.

Ruikai Xue is a PhD candidate on international relations of the School of Public Administration, Jilin University. His main areas of study are international security, China-Russia relations, as well as war and conflict resolution in Eurasia. He once studied as an exchange student at St. Petersburg State University and current served as a visiting PhD student at Hokkaido University.

SRBUHI MICHIKYAN

CRRC-Armenia

Precarious Work and the Reproduction of Social Injustice in the Retail and Catering Sector: An illustration of the Armenian retail and catering sector

In a currently changing environment, working conditions are becoming more and more unstable for many professions; the fields of retail and wholesale trade, repairing and construction, and hotel and restaurant service are some of the most vulnerable in terms of low and unstable income, low level of job security and limited access to social security systems. Nowadays, the term precariousness or precarious employment is used to describe this uncertainty, instability, and the riskiness of such working conditions. Considering the situation in Armenia, where regulations in the field are unclear, the study of the labor market according to criteria of precarious employment is particularly important. Moreover, problems related to social justice, which are among the risks caused by precarious employment, have not been studied here yet. This research aims to study the reproduction of social injustice between groups involved in precarious employment. The study was conducted using a grounded theory approach, a qualitative methodology that uncovers a process underlying an unknown or little-known phenomenon. This approach builds the theory of

motivation for entering the precarious environment and the possibilities of “overcoming” the instability and uncertainty caused by it. By this, the research fills the gap on the issue and provides primary data on it, for research purposes, in-depth interviews with key informants were conducted. It has become clear that in this process, in the conditions of precarious employment, four typical working models are formed, which differ in the unequal distribution of socio-economic resources, alternatives of work, and opportunities to gain power in the workplace.

Srbuhi Michikyan holds a master’s degree in Research Methodology and a Bachelor’s degree in Sociology, both from Yerevan State University. She spent the second semester of her master’s degree studies at the University of Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic. Now she is a Ph.D. student in Social research methodology, theories, social technologies, and processes at Yerevan State University. Srbuhi also worked as a student-expert in the accreditation of higher education. She worked for the governments of Armenia as a national expert and Luxembourg as an international expert. Aside from this, she has experience in coordinating and organizing local and international workshops and trainings. Her research interests include urban studies, space, and place transformation studies, studies of rurality, and inequality. She is acquainted with both qualitative and quantitative analysis, but mostly specialized in qualitative research, specifically using the Grounded theory and Narrative semiotics methodologies.

SESSION D: INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

NAZRIN GADIMOVA

Friedrich Schiller University of Jena, Institute for Caucasus Studies

The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the 2020 War Period: Dominant attitudes and factors shaping public opinion in the conflict-affected societies

The 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh dramatically changed the situation in the South Caucasus. While the war restored Azerbaijani control over territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh and allowed hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani IDPs to return to their homes, it also caused new trauma with thousands of human losses and massive destruction on the battlefield. Most notably, it led to even more intransigence of societies to compromise and strengthened the concepts of nationalism and conflict narratives in public discourse. Yet understanding and affecting the factors that shape this attitude can significantly contribute to the analysis of the conflict as well as influence the process of conflict transformation in the post-war period. This presentation/article aims to analyze public opinion prevailing in Armenian, Azerbaijani and Karabakhi societies on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and discuss the factors playing an important role in the formation of these dominant attitudes. While the 2023 surveys held by CRRC-Armenia and Agora-Azerbaijan give a wide and much-needed picture of public opinion among the Armenian/Karabakhi and Azerbaijani population regarding the conflict, it would be valuable to analyze the factors shaping this public opinion in the future surveys as well. Based on that, the presentation will discuss the recent findings of the CRRC and Agora surveys revealing diametrically different attitudes of local societies towards the solution of the conflict, as well as offering to analyze the factors shaping these attitudes from the constructivist perspective with a focus on media, education, official propaganda and other sources of information. The list can be supplemented with the discussion of identity-driven factors such as the memory of genocide in Armenian

society and the first Karabakh war in Azerbaijani society. Finally, the surveys can also be differentiated based on the group of respondents, with a special focus on conflict-affected members of societies, including IDPs and refugees, war veterans and families of soldiers who lost their lives during the first or second phase of the conflict, as well as people inhabiting areas in the proximity of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. It is believed that methodological innovation in the analysis of the factors shaping public attitude would help to build a relevant strategy for governments, international peacebuilding organizations and local peace activists in the process of transformation of public discourse and pave the way to positive changes in the attitudes of local societies.

Dr. Nazrin Gadimova is a Visiting Fellow at Friedrich Schiller University of Jena, Institute for Caucasus Studies. She previously worked for the Center for International and European Studies, CIES at Kadir Has University (Istanbul) and Center for Strategic Studies, SAM (Baku). She holds a doctoral degree from Kadir Has University and a master's degree from London School of Economics and Political Science.

KATHRYN WEBB

William & Mary

KENNAN BUTCHER

William & Mary

DANIELLA MARX

William & Mary

Proximity and Public Opinion: The effect of mosques on tolerance for religious minorities in Georgia

Since gaining independence in 1991, the Republic of Georgia has balanced itself in its policies between the Russian Federation and more Western, NATO powers, like the United States and Turkey, threatening Russian dominance in the region. Starting in the early 2010s, Turkey has invested significant funds into developing

closer ties with the Republic of Georgia, especially on a cultural and religious basis. One mechanism is in the form of mosque restoration projects to undo disrepair stemming from decades of neglect under Soviet rule. In response to Turkey's efforts to support Islamic minorities through increased cultural presence and maintenance of historic sites, right-wing groups and Russian-language media outlets have framed these projects as an effort to undermine Georgian national identity, as defined by Georgian Orthodox Christianity. As a result, several mosque projects have encountered backlash, been delayed, or canceled entirely. But how do individuals in the communities where these mosques are located respond to the investment? Are responses to these projects negatively received by residents close to the mosques, or is the backlash concentrated among those who are negatively predisposed to Muslims? To answer this question, we use open-source geospatial data to locate over 200 mosques across Georgia. We then match mosque locations to respondents of the CRRC Hate crime, hate speech, and discrimination in Georgia survey. The survey allows us to develop a measure of Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim sentiment. We explore the relationship between proximity to mosques and sentiment towards Islam and general religious diversity in Georgia. Using this religious tolerance variable as our dependent variable, we regress on several independent variables, including quantity of mosques in a 15 kilometer radius from the municipality city center, as a measure of passive interactions with religious minorities. We hypothesize that even passing by minority religious sites on a regular basis will have a positive effect on religious tolerance, as this familiarizes individuals with religious minorities and refutes the idea of an "other" that threatens Georgian national identity. Ultimately, we find that mosques do have a statistically significant, negative effect on anti-Islamic sentiment. These results suggest that backlash against mosque restoration or mosques may be more the result of certain domestic or foreign media narratives rather than significant backlash from local communities.

Kathryn Webb is a recent graduate of the College of William & Mary, where she obtained a Bachelors of Arts

degrees in Economics and Russian Post-Soviet Studies. In her undergraduate studies, Kathryn and her colleagues conducted research on religious tolerance in Georgia using CRRC data, under the mentorship of Dr. Daniel Maliniak. Kathryn is excited to be beginning a career in diplomacy and international development across Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

BENJAMIN SUTCLIFFE

Miami University

Dialog and the Shadows of Empire in the Russophone Literary Collection: A Time to Live

In 2003 Georgian author Guram Odisharia and Abkhaz cultural figure Batal Kobakhia published the literary collection *A Time to Live* (*Vremia zhit'*), which contains stories of the conflicts marring the South Caucasus from the late 1980s to today. The volume, published in Russian, involved authors from Abkhazia, Ossetia, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Odisharia notes that this is a collection published by and for readers in the South Caucasus. Prominent writers such as Fazil' Iskander, Daur Nachkebia, and Odisharia himself contribute short stories; the volume's opening piece is an anti-war essay by Azerbaijani author Fakhri Urgulu. Often one story depicting a war follows an account by an author from the opposing side. In this manner the reader experiences divergent visions of the same conflict; the collection brings together disparate voices in the South Caucasus. *A Time to Live* focuses on dialog and empathy, concepts echoing values of the late-Soviet intelligentsia as well as the five national cultures in the collection. This volume's use of Russian is also important. As Tamar Koplatadze suggests, too often the role of Russian in the Caucasus underlines the postcolonial problems facing the region. Naomi Caffee, Kevin Platt, and Mark Lipovetsky define Russophone writing as literature in Russian by non-Russians and often published outside of the Russian Federation. This prose is geographically and culturally diverse and at times resists Putin's distortion of the "Russian world" for political purposes. Twenty years after the publication of *A Time to Live*, ongoing violence in the South Caucasus and the 2022

invasion of Ukraine suggest both that the editors' hopes for peace were naïve and that Russophone writing is tainted by Russia's aggression. However, Odisharia and Kobakhia's volume, which resulted in three subsequent collections, remains a model for using literature to mitigate conflict in the South Caucasus. My presentation investigates how *A Time to Live* depicts war and its consequences while exploring the repercussions of the Soviet experience and using Russian to express these concerns. The presentation is a part of my current monograph, which deals with contemporary Russophone writing in the South Caucasus.

Benjamin Sutcliffe is professor of Russian at Miami University where he works with the Havighurst Center for Russian and Post-Soviet Studies. He is working on a monograph on Russophone writing in the contemporary South Caucasus.

ANANO KIPIANI

CRRC-Georgia

TAMAR KHOSHTARIA

CRRC-Georgia, Ilia State University

Analyzing young people's attitudes towards different cultures, sub-cultures and sexual orientations

This paper looks at people's attitudes (with a focus on young people) towards different cultures, sub-cultures and sexual minorities in Georgia, and analyses how these attitudes are translated into action towards minority groups (in schools and after school life) and how minority groups feel about these attitudes and actions towards them. Using secondary analysis from survey data as well as data from focus groups with minorities, the paper aims to better understand the level of tolerance towards minority groups of different cultures, subcultures and sexual orientations in Georgia, and how life is in secondary schools and after school for those who do not share mainstream values and follow traditional standards of appearance and living. The analysis shows that while

diversity is generally perceived to be a rather positive thing in Georgia, being different is hard for minority groups as they experience discrimination and bullying not only because of expressing their identity (e.g., different clothing styles, appearance, lifestyle), but also as a response to being different (e.g., ethnicity, religion, nationality) from the majority in general.

Anano Kipiani holds a master's degree in Economics from the International School of Economics at Tbilisi State University (ISET) and a bachelor's degree in Informatics from Tbilisi State University. A combination of her technical background and social science interests pushed her into policy analysis and qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Her main research interests include the health, social, religion, cultural and educational sectors. She is actively involved in public demonstrations for freedom of speech and expression.

Tamar Khoshtaria is a Senior Researcher at the research institution CRRC-Georgia and an Assistant Professor at the Ilia State University (Tbilisi, Georgia). Tamar holds a PhD in Sociology from the Iv. Javakishvili Tbilisi State University. She has 13 years of experience in qualitative and quantitative research and participated in over 50 research projects. Tamar led and participated in youth studies including EU funded international projects "Cultural Heritage and Identities of Europe's Future" (CHIEF), and "Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Participation" (MYPLACE). Her research interests include the values of young people, social and religious issues as well as cross-cultural comparisons.

Methods Workshop: Empowering Research Subjects through "Photovoice" in the South Caucasus

This will be a three-part, hybrid workshop on the use of "photovoice". Photovoice is a qualitative, community-based participatory action research method, which empowers research participants by directly engaging them in the research process through photography and photo-elicitation. Because this is a collaborative method,

participants share in the co-generation of knowledge, exercise autonomy and authorship over representations over their stories, and are provided a meaningful platform to campaign for constructive social change. In the first part of this training, we will define and discuss the benefits and drawbacks of photovoice as a qualitative, visual social science research method. In this section, we will briefly discuss the methodological foundations of this approach, particularly how this method builds from Paulo Freire's "critical consciousness" principles. In the second part of the training, we will show how photovoice was used as a component of a feminist visual ethnography project to study the emotional impact of infrastructure disrepair on internally displaced persons (IDPs) inhabiting the former Soviet sanatorium in Tskaltubo, Georgia. In addition to sharing some of the key findings from this project, we will emphasize how the traveling exhibition created from the photos, "Violent Infrastructures: Ecologies of Decay and Displacement," has been used as a form of public scholarship and advocacy for more than just housing policy for IDPs from Abkhazia. In the final part of the training, we will use active and experiential learning techniques, e.g., fishbowl strategy, to walk participants through the implementation process and procedures, challenges, and ethical considerations of how to add a photovoice component to research projects that study community concerns involving conflict-affected or other marginalized populations. By the end of this three-part sequence, workshop participants should have the foundation and basic tools to begin planning their own photovoice project.

Ariel Otruba, PhD is a feminist political geographer, conflict resolution practitioner, and anti-trafficking advocate. She is the 2022-23 InFocus: War and Peace Scholar in Residence at Moravian University and an adjunct professor in the M.A. in International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program at Arcadia University. Dr. Otruba's research focuses on feminist approaches to critical geopolitics, border and migration studies, and political ecology in the South Caucasus. Her most recent scholarly achievements include "Violent Infrastructure: Ecologies of Decay and Displacement," a photovoice and immersive, multimedia exhibition, and the publication of

"No (Wo)man's Land: Risking Detention Along the South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line," a chapter in Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen's (2022) *Invisible Borders in a Very Bordered World: Geographies of Power, Mobility, and Belonging*.

Natia Kekenadze is a young scientist, with over five years of experience in social research. She is currently a doctoral student in Urbanism at Tbilisi State University and has started working on a dissertation on the study of mechanisms of citizen participation in Georgia and the analysis of stakeholders. Natia as a researcher has been actively involved in various projects funded by academic, local, and international organisations. Among them are Shota Rustaveli National Foundation, UNDP; Erasmus University Rotterdam, UN Women, Open Society Foundations, and the American Research Institute of the South Caucasus (ARISC). These research projects were related to aspects of citizen involvement and target women, citizens living in the regions, ethnic minorities and IDPs, both in urban decision-making and in local self-government. Natia is especially interested in new and modern methodological approaches to research.