



CASCADE Newsletter, March 2015

Editorial

The Caucasus crossroads of interdependencies

By Jos Boonstra, head of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia programme at FRIDE and coordinator of Work Package 8 on 'The Caucasus in the wider neighbourhood' of the Cascade project.

The Caucasus is a highly diverse region at the crossroads between Europe, the Middle East and Asia; between the Black Sea and the Caspian; and between European, Russian, Turkish, and Iranian influences. The latter four external 'powers' and 'cultures' are part and parcel of today's Caucasus either geographically (Russia and Turkey), through minorities (Iran harbours a large Azeri minority) or of course as part of the broader European continent.

There are strong interdependencies between the large 'external' actors and the three South Caucasus states of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. These are aggravated by the region's complex protracted conflicts. Among these, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict stands out. Russia supports Armenia on the one side, while Turkey supports Azerbaijan on the other side, and each party has a stake in the conflict. However, so far not to the extent that it may affect Russo-Turkish relations or even Russo-Azerbaijani relations. The conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia are largely influenced by Russia, who supports these republics and has even recognised them.

Nonetheless, there remain interdependencies between these regions and Georgia proper, and Russia's stance there will eventually affect relations with the European Union (EU) and the United States (US), especially in light of the current Ukraine crisis.

Besides a complicated web of security relations between states and through regional organisations, other key aspects of interdependence relate to trade and energy. With regard to the former, a division is unfolding between on the one hand, Georgia and the EU that are bound together by a recently signed Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, and on the other hand, Armenia and Russia that are members of the Eurasian Economic Union. These frameworks are non-compatible. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan does not belong to either 'bloc', but still will not trade with Armenia while the latter's borders are closed with Turkey and Armenia is heavily dependent on Iran's and Georgia's land routes (in the case of the latter to reach Russia and Europe). In addition, as a substantial producer of oil and gas, Azerbaijan is largely dependent on infrastructure through Georgia en route to Turkey, while the country also seeks to be an important part of the European energy puzzle that intends to lessen dependence on Russia.

The Cascade Work Package on 'The Caucasus and the wider neighbourhood' will look deeply into these interdependencies. Whereas other research packages

investigate the ‘internal’ aspects that are part of the security-democracy nexus in the Caucasus, our research will assess external actors and factors and seek to distil implications and policy options for the EU. Here lies a challenge, as the EU will not only have to adapt to a changing region, but face the fact that it is clearly an influential actor itself that has the possibility to influence other actors in the region. This two-way street of actions and interests coming from the region and initiatives and policies flowing from Brussels is in

upheaval as nervousness grows over Russian military action in its ‘near abroad’ and tensions increase between the EU/NATO and Russia. These challenges not only affect Ukraine, but are likely to have an impact on the Caucasus as well. The EU will need to show resolve in its policies towards the Caucasus and be realistic about its capacities (and its limitations), while being open to the region’s countries and societies.

Publications

CASCADE Policy Brief: Jos Boonstra and Laure Delcour, ‘[A broken region: evaluating EU policies in the South Caucasus](#)’, FRIDE Policy Brief 193, January 2015.

The South Caucasus is a broken region characterised by local tensions and conflicting influences of large regional actors – the European Union, Russia and Turkey. The EU remains highly attractive to South Caucasus societies but its technocratic and government-focused policies have failed with Armenia and Azerbaijan, while reform in Georgia remains fragile. Furthermore, the region remains volatile due to the high potential for domestic instability; inflammable protracted conflicts; and Russia’s heavy influence. The EU, therefore, needs to do three things: develop more flexible country-specific policies (alongside renewed multilateral engagement); encourage the reform of local security sectors; and place societies at the core of its approach to the region. Read more <http://fride.org/publication/1246/a-broken-region:-evaluating-eu-policies-in-the-south-caucasus>.

Article: Laure Delcour and Katarzyna Wolczuck, ‘[The EU’s unexpected “ideal neighbour?” The perplexing case of Armenia’s Europeanisation](#)’, *Journal of European Integration*, 17 February 2015.

The question of why some countries adopt external policy templates is particularly salient with regard to Armenia. All indicators suggest that Armenia would be unlikely to respond to EU stimuli for reform. And yet, in the early 2010s, Armenia vigorously adopted EU policy and institutional templates. This article seeks to explain this conundrum by exploring how EU policies (especially under the Eastern Partnership) feed into the domestic context and meet the agenda of national elites. The article deliberately departs from the mainstream explanations of ‘Europeanisation beyond accession’ and argues that closer scrutiny of the domestic context is a sine qua non for making sense of the baffling discrepancies in neighbouring states’ responses to EU policies. The case of Armenia vividly demonstrates the imperative for re-assessing the approaches that have so far focused on EU-level factors and for bringing together EU variables with a detailed analysis of the domestic and regional contexts.

Book chapter: Jos Boonstra, ‘Consistence, flexibility and engagement are crucial for the EU’s Eastern Partnership’, in Gayane Novikova (ed.) *Euro-Atlantic Partnerships and the South Caucasus: a strategic approach to regional security* (Yerevan: Spectrum Center for Strategic Analysis, 2014).

The Vilnius summit, held at the end of November 2013, already showed that geopolitical competition risks crippling the drive of the European Union’s (EU) Eastern Partnership (EaP) towards regional cooperation, reform and engagement with the societies of Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. The events in Ukraine in the first quarter of 2014 and the sudden annexation by Russia of Crimea will have a heavy impact on EU-Russia relations, as well as on the further development of the Eastern Partnership. Besides a severe downgrading of EU-Russia relations, concluding Association Agreements (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine will also prove challenging. In the years ahead, the EaP should address three broad questions in particular. First, shaping a broader EU approach to the Eastern neighbourhood that is consistent though flexible when necessary. Second, making progress regarding AAs and DCFTAs on the basis of genuine reform. And third, developing broader relations with Eastern partners’ societies through visa liberalisation, civil society support, and public engagement. For more information see <http://www.spectrum.am>.

Article: Sophie Zviadadze, ‘[I “like” my patriarch. Religion on Facebook-New forms of religiosity in contemporary Georgia](#)’, *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, 2014(6): 164-194

Facebook is Georgia’s most popular Internet platform. It is a space where people widely and frequently discuss religious issues, be they orthodox religious opinions or critical understandings of religion. This article analyses the presence of religion on Facebook and how young people affiliate with religious issues. It examines whether the ‘religious face’ on Facebook correlates with religious identity in real life. It also explores new tendencies in young people’s religiosity and

what kind of influence religion on Facebook has in building their identity. Generally, the paper will explore the new forms of religiousness (for example asking forgiveness publicly on Facebook on 'day of forgiveness') – is it a performance of traditional religion through a new medium or are we dealing with profanation of religion? Read more <http://dx.doi.org/10.11588/rel.2014.0.17365>.

Article: Florian Mühlfried, 'Let's flow! Circular migration and transhumant mobility among the Tushetians of Georgia', *Caucasus Survey*, 2(1-2), 2014

The paper deals with the migration practices of a Georgian population called the Tushetians and their recent developments. After an outline of the Tushetians' traditional and contemporary migration patterns, details of migration to the Russian Federation, Spain and Greece are presented, followed by some reflections on the impact of these forms of migration on gender roles in the home villages. This leads to a more general discussion of the compatibility of Tushetian migration patterns with the European Union (EU) policy of circular migration, as well as the impact of the Eurozone

crisis on migrants from post-Socialist countries such as Georgia. Read more <http://www.caucasus-survey.org/vol2/muehlfried-migration-tushetians-of-Georgia.php>.

Book: Sopiko Zviadadze, *Religion and politics in Georgia: the relations of church and state and the secularization issue in post-communist Georgia* (Hamburg, Verlag Dr. Kovac, 2014).

With the increase of authority and popularity of religion in post-communist Georgia, the Georgian Orthodox Church has become an influential actor in politics and society. This book describes the growing importance of religion and its influence on political and social processes. It analyses the uneasy relation between state and church and the difficulties of separation. The rapprochement between the Orthodox Church and the Georgian state demonstrates the challenges of secularisation in contemporary Georgia. A further research question is whether the Georgian Orthodox Church reveals itself as a public religion and what opportunities and dangers this phenomenon has in contemporary Georgia. Read more <http://www.verlagdrkovac.de/978-3-8300-7656-8.htm>.

Events

CASCADE meeting: 'Local economic and social development in the Caucasus', 19-20 December 2014, Moscow, Russia.

Members of the CASCADE WP4 on 'Local economic and social development in the Caucasus', ISSICEU researchers, experts on the Caucasus from the Institute of Geography and other Moscow-based organisations met in Moscow at the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences on 19-20 December 2014 to discuss preliminary research results and coordinate further work. The workshop brought together 15 researchers from Moscow, Grozny, Tbilisi (Jena), Yerevan and Paris. Read more <http://www.cascade-caucasus.eu/553>.

CASCADE-ISSICEU meeting, December 2014, Birmingham University.

In December 2014, the University of Birmingham's CASCADE team met up with Katharina Hoffman, senior researcher under CASCADE's sister project ISSICEU. Researchers discussed the possibility of organising joint events and combining outputs into joint publications. Such coordination could result in synergies and bring added value for both sides. Read more <http://www.cascade-caucasus.eu/547>.

Scientific Forum: 'New social and economic development strategy - Georgia 2020', 5-7 February 2015, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Jos Boonstra visited Georgia on 5-7 February to speak at a Scientific Forum in Tbilisi organised by the Institute for the Development of Freedom of Information. He took part in the session on 'Regional security and energy challenges of Georgia for the year of 2020'. Read more <https://idfi.ge/en/scientific-forum-new-social-and-economic-development-strategy-georgia-2020>.

Workshop: 'Local impacts of changing international borders', 3 December 2014, Berlin, Germany.

Nino Kemoklidze, PhD at University of Birmingham and member of CASCADE, presented a paper on 'Georgia's Disputed Borderland', in which she explored the symbolic meaning of territory to the conflicting sides in Abkhazia and how it continues to influence the prospects of a peaceful resolution of this conflict. This event, organised by the University of Eastern Finland and the University of Southern Denmark, in cooperation with the Embassy of Finland to Germany, brought together a number of scholars from various fields of study working on different aspects of disputed borders in Europe and how these impact people on the ground.

Research Trips

Fieldwork to Azerbaijan, January 2015

Sophie Hohmann carried out a first mission to Azerbaijan (Baku, Sheki, Kish and Oguz). She conducted meetings and interviews with experts, academics and institutional stakeholders as part of her research on migration. These

meetings were also an opportunity to refine survey methods. Under CASCADE, her work will focus on the transformation of migration processes and the sociological implications of migration. Read more <http://www.cascade-caucasus.eu/587>.

Announcements

In December 2014, Nino Kemoklidze successfully defended her PhD thesis on 'Identity and Violence: cases in Georgia'. Nino's supervisors were Kataryna Wolczuk and Stefan Wolff from the University of Birmingham. Using archival material and in-depth interviews, this thesis explored the nexus between identity construction and the outbreak of violence in Georgia in the early 1990s and provided a

detailed examination of the development of inter-ethnic relations from ethnic tensions to ethnic violence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In December 2014, Tika Tsertsvadze left FRIDE and Maria Garcia-Casas took over her tasks in Work Package 10 on 'Dissemination and Outreach'.

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