



Call for papers – International conference

THE DEMOCRACY-SECURITY NEXUS IN AND AROUND THE CAUCASUS

Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels 20-21 October 2016



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

This international conference will be organised as part of the EU-FP7 CASCADe project (www.cascade-caucasus.eu). It will critically re-examine the link between security and democratisation in the Caucasus, in a context of growing authoritarianism and new protest movements, as well as conflict transformation resulting from broader political upheavals in the wider neighbourhood. This re-examination will be informed by a combination of macro- and micro-approaches.

In recent years, two intertwined arguments have served as the underlying basis of the prevailing analyses of political and societal transformations in the Caucasus. First, the region is experiencing (or, if this is not the case, should experience) a democratisation process. Second, democratisation will play a key role in fostering security. The project critically appraises this dominant perspective. It scrutinises the interplay between democracy and security on the basis of 1) a criticism of the teleological prism that (despite being voiced in democratisation studies) still prevails in scholarly work on the Caucasus, and 2) a shift toward local societies' (and away from external actors') perceptions of security.

While approaches to security are extremely diverse (as illustrated by the sheer variety of concepts, e.g. 'human security', 'comprehensive security'), the CASCADe team places the emphasis on the link between security and societal dynamics and applies a holistic concept of security. In doing so, it explores the multifaceted and multi-causal aspects underlying this connection. For instance, to the extent that it authorises, legitimates and enables contestation, democratisation may increase insecurity. In some other cases, authoritarian rules may foster illiberal peace, or conversely instrumentalise unresolved conflicts and use them as a political resource.

Such an approach is sensitive to current developments in the Caucasus, namely growing authoritarianism and the emergence of new protest movements. These have partly developed outside organised civil society that was a key interlocutor for external actors. Therefore, the impact of the EU's "democracy promotion" and "good governance" policies should be re-assessed in the light of recent developments.

CASCADE's final conference will go beyond the conceptualisation of the Caucasus as an area driven by external actors' concerns and policies. Instead, it will seek to bring together local and external perspectives. The conference will place the emphasis on the following issues:

1) Investigating protest movements

In the wake of the so-called "Arab Spring", "Colour Revolutions" and "Euromaidan", protest movements are frequently analysed through the democracy/autocracy prism. The predominant interpretations suggest that these movements have developed in the name of democracy, against authoritarian regimes.

However, to what extent are these interpretations relevant to study the protest movements that have recently developed in the Caucasus? To what extent are these movements actually sensitive to democracy? To what extent are they driven by socio-economic motivations, including the rejection of the ruling elite's corruption? How are they connected to organised civil societies upon which democratisation programmes have so far relied? To what extent can current collective mobilisations yield some degree of democratic learning, even in a context of contestation of the normative basis of democracy?

2) Questioning the EU's normative power

Both local and external actors' narratives are based on the premise of a correlation between Europeanisation and democratisation. However, to what extent does the EU's support or 'good governance' entail democratisation? To what extent does the EU prioritise democratisation over stabilisation in the Caucasus?

The EU's recent policies as part of the Eastern Partnership (including, for instance, negotiations for Deep and Comprehensive Free-Trade Areas and visa liberalisation) have placed the emphasis on regulatory convergence with EU standards with the view to improving 'good governance'. Some argue that functional cooperation reflects a shift in the EU's approach to democracy promotion, as EU sectoral policies include strongly codified democratic principles. Yet, does the EU focus on these principles in the practice of relations with Caucasus countries (for instance in the visa liberalisation process), or does it rather seek to export security-related rules? In the latter case, whose security does the EU seek to ensure? What are the actual effects of EU policies in terms of supporting political change and democratisation, or conversely reinforcing (even if inadvertently) the ruling elites? How are EU policies perceived by local actors?

3) Exploring the impact of Wider Neighbourhood interactions and conflicts on local societies

Recent upheavals in the Caucasus' Wider Neighbourhood (in an area ranging from Eastern Europe and Russia to Turkey, Syria and Iran) point to two major issues. First, they are tightly connected to regime transformation, as evidenced by the growing use of coercion in both Russia and Turkey. Second, they highlight the fragility of state borders and the lack of state control over a growing number of territories, be it in Eastern Ukraine, in the de facto states or in the Middle-East. These upheavals have triggered complex implications in the Caucasus. The region is subject to new movements of persons (e.g. the inflow of refugees from Syria and Iraq, the outflow of Caucasian fighters to Ukraine and Syria) and ideas (e.g. Islamist ideologies).

In exploring the impact of Wider Neighbourhood interactions on the Caucasus, the conference will pay specific attention to the reception and use by local actors and societies of external actors' policies and new patterns of interaction in the wider neighbourhood. For instance, does the development of two deep economic integration schemes limit local actors' room for manoeuvre or, conversely, does it provide them with new opportunities to pursue their own interests?

4) New Mobility Patterns

The lack of social, economic and ontological security, political authoritarianism and a general sense of “no future” in their home countries are factors that continue to motivate Caucasian citizens to migrate. The most popular destinations are the Russian Federation and the European Union. Recent economic crises in Europe and Russia, however, have significantly worsened the labour environment in these regions. Destinations like Spain and, to a lesser degree, Greece are becoming less popular; remittances from the European Union and particularly the Russian Federation are declining significantly, with dramatic consequences for local economies. New destinations are highly sought after and old destinations like Turkey are re-evaluated. Overall, people continue to be on the move, and at least for Georgia, the visa-free travel envisaged with the EU for 2016 would open up new horizons. The current massive influx of refugees to the EU and the inability of EU and national institutions to cope with this influx, however, will most likely negatively affect mobility patterns across the border of the Schengen region.

Within this framework, we try to understand how mobility patterns have recently changed and what these changes tell us about the condition of the Caucasus as well as of the European Union.

The conference welcomes papers from a broad range of disciplines, *inter alia* anthropology, history, geography, sociology, anthropology, political science, international relations, security studies and economics. Topics may include, among others:

- Actors involved in protest movements (e.g. youth, religious movements) and their links with organised civil society and political parties,
 - Groups promoting anti-democratic ideologies (think-tanks, NGOs, political parties)
 - Trajectories and circulation of fighters,
 - New mobility patterns,
 - Impact of Russia’s economic crisis and the EU’s refugee crisis on migration patterns, remittances and migration policies,
 - Circulation of policy ideas and models to and across the Caucasus
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The conference is funded by the EU’s 7th FWP project CASCADE (www.cascade-caucasus.eu). **Paper proposals (250 words) together with a short bio (100 words)** should be submitted in **English or Russian** by **15 April 2016** to Laure Delcour (ldelcour@msh-paris.fr) and Nino Kemoklidze (n.kemoklidze@bham.ac.uk). The authors of accepted proposals will be notified **by May 20th, 2016**.

The conference will take place in **Brussels (Université Libre de Bruxelles)** on **20 and 21 October 2016**. Travel to, and accommodation in Brussels will be funded for the authors of accepted papers.

Scientific committee:

Leila Alieva, St Antony College, Oxford University; Derek Averre, University of Birmingham; Laure Delcour, FMSH; Nino Kemoklidze, University of Birmingham; Kakha Gogolashvili, GFSIS; Ashot Khurshudyan, ICHD; Vladimir Kolosov, Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Anne Le Huérou, FMSH; Florian Mühlfried, Jena University; Kevork Oskanian, University of Birmingham; Silvia Serrano, FMSH.

Organising committee:

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