



FINAL REPORT

PUBLISHABLE SUMMARY

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Executive summary

Over the past three years, CASCADE has sought to de-compartmentalise research on the Caucasus by exploring linkages between societal challenges, political developments and conflicts and investigating the interactions between the North and South Caucasus, as well as between the Caucasus and its wider neighbourhood. CASCADE has sought to critically appraise the dominant scholarly perspective on the connections between democracy and security. By shifting attention to local perceptions of security and integrating societal challenges in the analysis of security, the project has addressed those research issues that have been until recently marginalised in scholarly analysis. Drawing upon a strong interdisciplinary approach and extensive fieldwork across the region, the project has provided a more nuanced and accurate understanding of how democracy and security are perceived, understood, experienced and exploited as political and social resources by Caucasus actors and other actors involved in the region.

We show that the connections between democracy and security play out differently in the Caucasus. In semi-democratic or authoritarian states with weak institutions – as in the Caucasus – the imperfect inclusion of elites and broader groups can lead to the state, and its Weberian monopoly of (assumedly) legitimate violence, being captured by sectional interests. However, democratisation can also cause ruptures in the state-building process and impair stability. In a similar vein, we demonstrate that the interconnections between different levels of security can play out differently. For instance, external actors can be both drivers of security and insecurity (e.g. by playing a role in the spill-over of conflicts) for Caucasian states and societies. The state (which retains key attributes of security) can also be a source of insecurity for its own citizens, either when it relies upon violence and coercion or when it fails to deliver effective socio-economic policies.

Our findings shed light on divergent perceptions of democracy and security among local (and within these, among different groups of actors), on the one hand, and external actors, on the other hand. For instance, while being increasingly perceived as a threat by some EU actors, migration has developed as major strategy for coping with economic and social insecurity in the Caucasus. Therefore, we show that investigating internal, or intra-state, processes is crucial to a fuller understanding of security/insecurity and democracy/authoritarian dynamics in the Caucasus. Whether related to energy security, trade cooperation or security mechanisms, our findings highlight the limits of geopolitical approaches that simplify the aims and intentions of external powers, emphasise the rivalry between Russia and the West and relinquish the South Caucasus' states of all agency in shaping their regional environment. By contrast, we shed light on how domestic actors respond to, and contribute to shaping external actors' policies.

A description of the project's context and objectives

Over the past decade, the Caucasus has emerged as a major neighbouring area of the EU. However, the region experiences hectic political and socio-economic transformations and it is affected by protracted conflicts, which are major sources of concern for the EU. Taking the EU's policy forward in the Caucasus requires a deeper understanding of the root causes behind security challenges as well as of the region's potential.

The research project CASCADE has conducted a comprehensive analysis of the connections between security and democracy in the Caucasus in support of the development of the EU's external policy. CASCADE has sought to critically appraise the dominant scholarly perspective on the connections between democracy and security. The project has addressed those research issues that have been until recently marginalised in scholarly analysis. CASCADE has shifted attention to local perceptions of security and integrated societal challenges in the analysis of security.

The project's specific objectives were to:

- 1) **conduct synergetic empirical research on democracy and security in the Caucasus.**

The project has scrutinised Caucasian societies with a view to investigating the root causes of conflict and insecurity, as well as studying the perspectives of democratisation in the region. In order to bridge the research gaps identified in the literature, the project has started from an inside-out perspective. CASCADE work packages have examined facets of security that are underexplored in scholarly analysis and are key to understanding the democracy-security nexus, e.g. migration and poverty (WP 3), potential tensions between economic transformations and traditions in local modernisation projects (WP 4), the link between political structures, democratisation and security issues/securitisation practices (WP 5) and religion and politics (WP 6). Focusing on conflicts, violence and peace-building, the project has examined the intersection of local dynamics with the actions of 'external' state and non-state actors (WP7). In a reversed outside-in perspective, the project has then mapped interdependence patterns and interactions with regional powers and international organisations as part of WP8 and 9.

Research undertaken as part of CASCADE has generated a wealth of data. We have conducted fieldwork in both the North Caucasus (Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Dagestan, Chechnya) and the South Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh). We have used a variety of qualitative research methods, including interviews, focus groups, and participant observation.

Our findings shed light on divergent perceptions of democracy and security among local (and within these, among different groups of actors), on the one hand, and external actors, on the other hand. CASCADE's work on migration provides an illustration of this discrepancy. While being increasingly perceived as a threat by some EU actors, migration has developed as major strategy for coping with poverty in the Caucasus. In fact, migration forms a set of practices aimed at enhancing ontological, economic and social security for citizens of the Caucasus. Against the backdrop of divergent perceptions of security, we find that both Caucasus states and external actors can generate insecurity for Caucasian societies. For instance, we show that large modernisation projects initiated by the Russian authorities in the North Caucasus can have negative consequences on local communities, such as depriving small local producers of earnings or contributing to the depopulation in the mountain areas.

Therefore, on the basis of a strong interdisciplinary approach and extensive fieldwork in both the South and North Caucasus, CASCADE has generated a more accurate and nuanced understanding of how democracy and security are perceived, understood, experienced and exploited as political and social resources by Caucasus actors and other actors involved in the region.

2) advance theoretical and conceptual knowledge on the democracy-security nexus.

CASCADE has moved beyond the state-of-the-art by de-compartmentalising research on the Caucasus. It has done so by adopting a holistic understanding of security and developing a strong interdisciplinary approach.

Firstly, the project has sought to explore linkages between societal challenges, political developments and conflicts as well as between the Caucasus and its wider neighbourhood. Through the analysis of these linkages, the project has produced and disseminated new conceptual insights into the critical connections between security and democracy. In particular, we have explored the problems in the intra-state context of building effective, sustainable institutions, the impact this produces in terms of the security dilemmas across the region and the role of external actors in their interaction with domestic actors in the Caucasus region. We demonstrate that the interconnections between different levels of security can play out differently. For instance, external actors can be both drivers of security and insecurity (e.g. by playing a role in the spill-over of conflicts) for Caucasian states and societies

Secondly, CASCADE has developed a strong dialogue between disciplines (e.g. sociology, political science, anthropology, international relations, geography) throughout the project. While drawing initially upon the International Relations literature on security and democracy, the project has reconceptualised the security-democracy nexus on the basis of the empirical data generated by work packages 3-9, using a variety of methods and

disciplines. Such a dialogue has enabled us to pay attention to the micro-level of security, which is usually neglected in the Politics/ International Relations literature. We find that even though the inter-state and region-wide levels have attracted most scholarly attention, investigating intra-state and local processes is crucial to a fuller understanding of security/insecurity and democracy/authoritarian dynamics in the Caucasus. This is because internal, local and even individual processes (for instance, feelings of insecurity and mistrust) shape the context in which intra-state and regional relations develop.

Overall, CASCADE research has highlighted the multifaceted and multi-causal aspects underlying the connection between security and democracy. 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.

3) provide forward-looking analysis on regional security and democratisation in the Caucasus.

Research conducted as part of CASCADE has sought to enhance the understanding of regional developments in the mid-term and to explore prospects for Europe in the Caucasus.

CASCADE's holistic approach to security has enabled us to account for the current developments in the Caucasus. These include, for instance, a growing authoritarianism and the emergence of new protest movements, which have partly developed outside organised civil society; new patterns of mobility around the Caucasus; and new movement of ideas.

CASCADE has mapped tendencies toward regionalisation from below (in a context shaped by competing EU and Russia deep economic integration schemes) and toward the emergence of a security system (e.g. energy transit) in the region. It has also charted opposite tendencies (e.g. increasingly divergent political and economic paths). Last but not least, on the basis of an extensive analysis of protracted conflicts, CASCADE has mapped emerging hot spots and conflict dynamics across the region. We have shown that recently, the risks of regionalised conflict in the Caucasus have been confounded by the intersection of international security crises (e.g. Syria, Ukraine) with the region. Therefore, the links from the Caucasus conflicts to the international level have been reversed as the international level has affected the Caucasus conflict.

4) spur debate, networking and exchange of ideas

CASCADE has sought to create a bridge to actors in the region by bringing academic, expert, NGO and policy communities from Europe and the Caucasus together

The project has done so by developing a regular interaction with these communities during the project's events. In addition, CASCADE has also initiated a Caucasus network, which is meant to act as a knowledge hub on the Caucasus. The network will last well beyond CASCADE's lifetime and it will serve as an overarching framework for existing initiatives.

5) **deliver recommendations to the EU on how best to enhance its role and contribute to the resolution of security challenges in the region.**

CASCADE was built in such a way that the academic research was developed having tangible policy recommendations in mind. These were discussed with policy-makers during the project's events and included in its publications. A set of recommendations was disseminated to EU policy-makers at the end of the project.

We find that the ongoing fragility and fragmentation of the Caucasus is not likely to be repaired anytime soon. Over the past decades, human security in the Caucasus has been undermined by poverty and impoverishment, growing inequalities, as well as the use of coercion by the state or private security forces. Unresolved conflicts and competition between external actors have only added to regional woes.

The EU can have a positive effect on the region's development, provided that it can design a clearer and firmer long-term vision of its relations with North and South Caucasus countries. This calls for taking into account country- and group- specific needs in the EU's promotion of stability and democracy. In order to be effective the EU should not derive its policies from its sole security concerns but better integrate Caucasus societies' needs and expectations in terms of security. For instance, the EU should better address social and economic insecurity, among others by strengthening social institutions and promoting models which take into account the historical experiences of Caucasian societies. The EU should also be more open to circular migration from the Caucasus, which could contribute to enhancing economic and social security of citizens in the region.

Regarding the conflicts, we find that the main regional risks lie with local triggers starting a conflict that could escalate quickly, and eventually draw in the larger region, and international powers. The constricting space for diplomacy and multilateral engagement together points to the urgent need for the EU to contribute to rebuilding dialogue with other powers and between regional actors and enhancing preventative diplomacy, early warning and conflict management across the Caucasus.

A description of the main results

WP2. Reconceptualising Democracy and Security in the Caucasus

Introduction

The main objective of WP2 was to re-conceptualise the link between security and democracy as a basis for understanding intra-state and regional security challenges.

The interaction between WP2 and the other work packages has proved critical for the whole project. On the one hand, WP 2 played a critical role in underpinning conceptually the interdisciplinary approach of the other work packages. On the other hand, the systematic and comparative empirical data generated by WP 3-9 have fed theoretical insights developed under Work Package 2 and enriched the understanding of the security-democracy nexus in the Caucasus.

Work undertaken

The work conducted under WP2 was based upon an extensive review of the Politics/International Relations literatures on security and democracy with a view to producing a conceptual framework. This conceptual framework elucidated the concepts of democracy, security and the links between them and is aimed at providing conceptual coherence for the empirical research of the various work packages. However, given CASCADE's strong interdisciplinary approach, it did so on the basis of a series of questions to be addressed by the various work packages, rather than by providing a single set of concepts to be used. Therefore, the conceptual framework represented a starting point with the aim of generating questions which the WPs may consider in their empirical research and establishing an on-going dialogue between disciplines throughout the project.

The next stage of WP2 involved reconceptualising the security-democracy nexus on the basis of the empirical data generated by work packages 3-9. This entailed refining the initial conceptual framework and preparing an editing volume informed by both the conceptual work carried out under WP2 and the findings of other WP.

Findings

We show that the connection between democracy and security plays out differently in the Caucasus. In semi-democratic or authoritarian states with weak institutions – as in the Caucasus – the imperfect inclusion of elites and broader groups can lead to the state, and its Weberian monopoly of (assumedly) legitimate violence, being captured by sectional interests. However, democratisation can also cause ruptures in the state-building process

and impair stability. This is due to the fact that democratic politics presupposes dissent and contest; democracy is not just establishing democratic institutions but is embedded in socioeconomic and cultural contexts, involves social agents. In a similar vein, we demonstrate that the interconnections between different levels of security can play out differently. For instance, external actors can be both drivers of security and insecurity (e.g. by playing a role in the spill-over of conflicts) for Caucasian states and societies. The state (which retains key attributes of security) can also be a source of insecurity for its own citizens, either when it relies upon violence and coercion or when it fails to deliver effective socio-economic policies.

Our findings shed light on divergent perceptions of democracy and security among local (and within these, among different groups of actors), on the one hand, and external actors, on the other hand. For instance, while being increasingly perceived as a threat by some EU actors, migration has developed as major strategy for coping with economic and social insecurity in the Caucasus. We demonstrate that the divergences between external and local actors' perceptions of what constitutes security and democracy, and the importance of widening perspectives beyond state-dominated narratives, prompts consideration of a number of problems: the impact of weak domestic governance on decision-making processes; the tendency of undemocratic regimes to manipulate popular opinion and securitise issues in order to justify illiberal policies; local-level practices of citizenship, social inclusion/exclusion and interaction between ethnic/religious minorities; and security sector reform and external assistance for conflict resolution.

Therefore, we show that investigating internal, or intra-state, processes is crucial to a fuller understanding of security/insecurity and democracy/authoritarian dynamics in the Caucasus. A lack of knowledge about democratic culture and a low level of social participation, prevents people in the region from exercising their rights and participating in decision-making appropriate to a genuine democratic system of governance. Shifting patterns of economic dependence and social change across the region - pose new problems for the region's. In Russia's own North Caucasus, the use of paramilitary forces and co-optation of local leaders by Moscow, establishing top-down governance and centralised power aimed at suppressing ethno-nationalist separatism and Islamist militancy and preserving Russia's territorial integrity, have provoked instability.

WP3. Migration, Mobilities and Poverty

Introduction

WP3 focused on migration processes from the Caucasus to the European Union and the socio-economic reasons behind these processes. Its main objective was to understand migration from the Caucasus in all its facets. A major driving force for migration from the Caucasus is poverty. Hence, a better understanding of how poverty affects Caucasian populations and how it can be effectively addressed provided the backdrop to analysing mobility in the Caucasus. The EU's migration policy (especially in respect to visa facilitation and readmission agreements, mobility partnerships and visa liberalisation) was another focus of enquiry under WP3. This work package combined academic research, policy-oriented work and awareness-raising activities.

Work undertaken

As part of WP3, we have first investigated the way in which the transformation of social policies across the Caucasus affects demographic changes and migration patterns

We have then used labour migration as a case study for an in-depth analysis, with foci on (i) Georgian female labour migration to Greece; and (ii) institutional capacities within South Caucasian governments to support migration to the EU.

Finally, labour migration was also at the core of the awareness-raising campaign and dissemination outputs (practical guidebooks) produced in Armenia for labour migrants to the EU,

WP3 primarily relied upon qualitative research methods, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, age-event grid (a life history methodology), in-depth qualitative surveys/interviews, biographical interviews, expert interviews, and literature review. It also used statistical analysis. Fieldwork was conducted in all three South Caucasus countries as well as in the Russian Federation.

Findings

Research on migrants from Azerbaijan confirms the strong connection between poverty and migration. We find that migration is a source of income in about half of rural households in Azerbaijan, and some 60% of remittances target families living in rural areas. It is a safety net in a country where the lack of consistent agricultural policies has put at risk the survival of rural households and where the public health system has sharply deteriorated. In this context, we show that Azerbaijanis developed new and complex migration strategies, where migration is integrated as a resource, but also as a risk. We also highlight the implications of

migration for social ties: labour migration reinforces solidarities among families, but not significantly among larger communities.

Regarding Georgian female labour migration to the EU, we find that the economic crisis in Greece has had multifaceted and complex effects on migrants. On the one hand, the need for domestic workers in the health sector has increased, due to the reduction of Greek pensions with the effect that pensioners cannot afford retirement houses any longer. On the other hand, job opportunities such as child care, cooking or cleaning have decreased because of the crisis and the average income offered to Georgian workers has dwindled. The decrease in job opportunities and salaries prompts many migrants to leave. Some go back to Georgia, where they are mostly unemployed and lack the social prestige they gained abroad. Others seek new destinations such as Italy and Spain, Turkey, and the US. Remittances have sharply dropped. In addition, over the past two years it has become much more difficult to obtain official papers for a regulated stay in Greece. The decrease in the number of residence permits, on the one hand, and the inability to meet the conditions and secure the necessary documents, on the other hand, lead to the fact that more and more migrants from Georgia are undocumented. Every woman from Georgia has experienced illegality during her stay in Greece. Therefore, overall the economic crisis in Greece has resulted in a decrease not only of economic security, but also social and ontological security for Georgian migrants.

Our findings at a macro-level complement and echo these conclusions. In the 1990s, the high level of poverty caused a considerable part of the population to leave the country. While the Georgian government designed a strategy to reduce poverty in line with its international commitments in the early 2000s, this strategy was gradually abandoned, despite the demand from international financial institutions to keep implementing it. In the early 2000s, the Georgian authorities did not develop a specific vision on migration either. We show that in a context characterised by the lack of both public demand and governmental strategy for the regulation of migration, the *rapprochement* with the EU emerged as the only source pushing the country towards relevant reforms. We find that the 2009 Mobility Partnership, in particular, is an important instrument for organising migration as it contributes to economic growth and prevents brain-drain from Georgia. However, its potential is not fully tapped due to the reluctance of some EU member states to facilitate circular migration.

The following conclusions and recommendations emerge from these findings: Migration policy is a major tool for strengthening the EU's role and impact in the Caucasus and improving perceptions of the EU in the region. In order for this tool to tap its full potential, EU migration policy must be based on accountability and transparency in order to allow for

predictability. Promoting and organising circular migration is a key element in order to better address one of the root causes of migration, namely poverty.

WP4. Local economic and social development

Introduction

Economic and social development is a major challenge across the Caucasus. Unemployment, poverty, isolation and backwardness of rural areas, and unemployment are both major obstacles to democratisation and security challenges.

Our research investigated the multifaceted tensions between political and economic changes, ethnic, religious and local traditions and new anti-modernisation trends. In doing so, it focused on local societies' visions of their economic security and development. In particular, it investigated the interaction between local and external actors (including federal/central governments and external investors). It analysed the inclusion (or lack thereof) of local populations in wide-ranging modernisation projects involving foreign investors, e.g. tourism development projects.

WP4 pursued three specific objectives. First, it sought to identify and analyse local modernisation development efforts in rural areas of the Caucasus. Second, it investigated the practical effects of the new legal and economic framework (privatisation, investments, national and international programmes). Third, it analysed the interaction of different political levels in the implementation of economic and social programmes across the Caucasus.

Work undertaken

First, we analysed the implications of economic policies and large programmes implemented by the Russian federal government in the North Caucasus and we studied processes leading to adjusting the reforms to regional specificities. Shifting to a micro-level, we also mapped local private initiatives in the North Caucasus and we sought to assess their impact.

Second, we explored the role of e-participation in local government in Armenia. We sought to map the emergence of e-participation and to analyse the implications on local government.

Third, on the basis of an anthropological case study conducted in an Armenian village close to the Turkish border, we sought to explain the impact of land privatisation (1990-1993) on social relations and the factors hindering modernisation.

Findings

The development of the North Caucasus Federal District is a key priority on the agenda of the federal and regional authorities. At the same time, our research highlights significant

differences between federal and local actors' opinions on avenues for development. We find that large projects based on federal or regional investments have controversial results, not least because they fix the population in the mountains, despite excessive labour resources.

In the North Caucasus, while some private economic initiatives by local agents are successful, we also find that the type of initiatives cannot form the basis for regional economic development. This is because of non-economic obstacles. In the North Caucasus, the rapid development of entrepreneurial activities and private initiatives coincides with the presence of multiple local communities that preserve deep allegiance to traditional values and culture. We identify the multitude of de facto legal systems ("polyjuridism": simultaneous use of Russian legislation, *adats*, and *sharia*, to which the population resorts depending on the situation); the competition between secular and religious systems of values: the low level of interpersonal trust, and grassroots and top-level corruption as the main obstacles to the expansion of private initiatives.

In Armenia, our study on e-participation has shed light on the high level of distrust towards local government. In fact, while in technical terms e-participation is feasible, scepticism among community members regarding public participation and its impact on decision-making emerges as the major obstacle to its expansion.

Our ethnographic study in an Armenian village yields interesting findings in terms of the implications of the macro legal and economic framework on micro practices and social interactions at a micro-level. Land reform in Armenia has led to a redistribution and concentration of poverty, which in turn determines the social status of the village's inhabitants. For those with scarce land, economic, social and ontological security depends on the sales of their agricultural production (grapes, fruits, vegetables) and access to the markets, particularly in Armenian cities, Georgia and Russia; however, these markets are both remote and instable. We identify depopulation and lack of modernisation as the main implications of the new legal framework on land.

WP5. Democratisation, political orders and civil society

Introduction

Whereas the North and South Caucasus (and, within the latter, the three countries and breakaway regions) differ in terms of their political trajectories, they also share similarities in the connection between political structures and securitisation practices. Democratisation is regarded both as a prerequisite for increased security and as a potential threat that could destabilise regimes and political mechanisms. This work package looked at democratisation processes through local eyes. First, it aimed at analysing political reforms and structures in the light of the security-democracy nexus. Its second objective was to study (on the basis of qualitative research) public attitudes to democratisation processes and the role of civil society actors in the region.

Work undertaken

First, we scrutinised anti-corruption policies in the three South Caucasus countries over the past two decades in light of their cooperation with, and commitments vis-à-vis the European Union.

We then focused on the oversight of the security sector as an illustration of the critical connections between democratisation and security in the South Caucasus. On the one hand, in recent years the security sectors of Caucasus states (armed forces, police, intelligence services, etc.) have sought to maximise their strength while on the other hand, there is a growing recognition of the need for stronger oversight mechanisms over the security sector (e.g. civilian management, parliamentary oversight, role of civil society). We specifically explored the interaction between actors involved in the oversight of the security sector.

Finally, we compared the processes and practices of democratisation across the region from the “bottom-up”, through “local eyes”. We explored the interaction between political institutions and various segments of societies in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the North Caucasus. We examined how ordinary citizens, civil society actors, and political elites view (and engage with) the processes of democratisation (or the lack of such processes) in these different parts of the region and how they contribute to the real (or perceived) sense of (in)security among its citizens.

Findings

Our findings shed light on the role of mistrust as a key factor shaping citizens’ attitudes to political processes and therefore limiting their participation and the pressure exerted on authorities for reform. While the three countries are highly diverse in terms of both progress achieved and tasks yet to be fulfilled in anti-corruption policies, we find that the lack of

political pluralism, open media and active civil society participation are major obstacles to effectively fighting against corruption in the region. In a similar vein, we find that the governments do not perceive any pressure for increased accountability of law enforcement bodies in the South Caucasus. In both areas, the legal framework exists but is not implemented. However, both in the fight against corruption and the oversight of security sector reform, international organisations (e.g. the EU, the Council of Europe, NATO) play a crucial role in pushing forward policy and legal changes and monitoring their application; in a context characterised by uneven and limited (or even non-existent, in the case of Azerbaijan) NGO access to public institutions, international organisations also contribute to increasing civil society's influence in pressuring authorities for reforms.

Our findings also shed light on the discrepancy between formal and informal political and civic participation processes. For instance, we show how the low civic participation in formal civil society results in the dominance of informal relations within the NGO sector and enables "uncivil" society (in other words, informal patronage networks, radical movements and extremist organisations –some registered and some remaining informal) to thrive in the South Caucasus. Our research also highlights paradoxes in the North Caucasus, e.g. the persistence of publications by independent media in spite of strong limitations to media freedom. However, we also find sharp differences between Chechnya (where the tight control by the authoritarian regime is challenged by civilian non-violent actions) and Dagestan (where the power's hold is weaker, yet the safety of journalists is not ensured).

WP6. Religion and politics

Introduction

After decades of Soviet anti-religious repression, religions have been shaping and transforming emerging public spaces. Building on an interdisciplinary approach combining political science, sociology and anthropology, this work package pursued three objectives. First, it aimed at exploring the relations between the state and the religions by scrutinising not only the institutional arrangements regulating the relationship between the state and cults, but also their implementation (or lack thereof) as well as the opportunities they provide for religious and political actors to strengthen their political and social weight. Second, it looked at religion and politicisation from below. Whereas politics is widely delegitimised by the population, religion allows politicisation or re-politicisation processes. For instance, while religious issues contribute to polarising the political arena the participation in public religious events such as processions often entails a political dimension. Third, this work package explored the connections between religion and transnational changes, as mobility and migrations alter the perception by religious actors of the territory and the nation and transform religious practices and rituals.

Work undertaken

The conceptual framework for this work package was based on Ernesto Laclau's reflections on "populism". We hypothesised that religions in the Caucasus (Eastern orthodoxy in Georgia, Islam in the North Caucasus, and probably more specifically Salafi Islam) are at the core of a "Populist Reason"¹, in the sense that they are the "empty signifiers" thanks to which antagonist political identities can emerge. Such an approach enabled us to heuristically consider the public role of religions in contexts of weak religiosity and poor knowledge of religious contents. This approach was highly relevant to understand the former Soviet space, where repressive State policies have led to a rupture in religious practice and religious teaching and to forced secularisation (even though to different degrees across the region).

As part of the work package, we have first investigated the changing political and social functions of religion in the Caucasus by studying the canonisation in 2013 by the Georgian synod of Gabriel, a monk known for his opposition to Soviet Rule and his isolation from the Church institution. The emergence of a cult around Father Gabriel is an illustration of the changes in the religious field in post-communist Georgian society. We then explored how religious heritage (including the restoration and use of religious buildings) is turned into a resource for the Georgian State to challenge the discourse of the Orthodox Church on national identity.

¹

Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, Verso, Londres, 2005, 276 p.

Second, we compared religious and non-religious collective mobilisation framing by focusing on social movements and Islamic activism in Dagestan. This also entailed researching the meaning of individual and collective interests of mobilised groups at the micro-level in Dagestani villages.

Third, we explored the coexistence of religious groups in the Caucasus and beyond - e.g. Christian-Jewish and Muslim-Jewish relations in Georgia, "Pagan"-Christian-Muslim relations in Abkhazia and Armenian-Muslim relations Northern Iran (with Täbriz as a centre), particular attention to the modes of sharing and not-sharing the sacra.

Fourth, we investigated the interplay between religion and nationalism in post-Soviet Azerbaijan, with the view to analysing the extent to which religions have been transformed by their encounter with nationalism.

Findings

The empirical research conducted in both the North and South Caucasus has confirmed one of our key hypotheses: after the collapse of the USSR (and more dramatically since the beginning of the 2000s) religions became the locus in which political dissent and cleavages over a large range of issues (such as disputes over land, historical narrative, family, etc.) can be expressed. Hence, religions bring back "the political", understood as "the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations"² to the domestic arenas

In Georgia, our research sheds light on the complex and multifaceted relationship between politics and religion. On the one hand, the State has played a role in institutionalising some popular practices and hence shaping religiosity (as demonstrated by the example of monk Gabriel); yet the attempts to use the symbolic resources provided by religion and hence to instrumentalise religion are not without limitations. On the other hand, in the pre-electoral context, competition between parties has led to an increased mobilisation of religious groups. In Abkhazia, we highlight that religious pluralism is a state-sponsored project. This differentiates Abkhazia from other *de facto* or *de jure* countries in the Caucasus where the project of post-soviet state-building is tightly interwoven with the revival of one religious institution such as Orthodox Christianity (e.g. in Georgia) or Islam (e.g. in Chechnya). In Dagestan, our research sheds light on the particular function of Islam (and its limits) as a source of legitimacy for various counterparts of a dispute about land.

Therefore, the research on religion and politics has shed some light on cases where these have led to violence and/or repression as well as cases in which antagonism has been successfully turned into agonism, and an arena where conflicts and differences can be confronted has been created. Studying these social or political conflicts involving religion helps going beyond the common view that creating consensus is a pre-condition for improving security and democratisation.

² Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism », Political Science Series, Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna, December 2000.

WP7. Conflict, violence and peace-building

Introduction

Conflict has been a defining feature of the South Caucasus over the past 30 years. However, in recent years, protracted conflicts in the Caucasus have begun to thaw, as illustrated by the war between Russia and Georgia in 2008 and the flare-up of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2016. WP7 examined the intersection of local dynamics with the actions of 'external' state and non-state actors in the conflicts of the region.

The main objective of this work package was to identify the patterns, sources and dynamics of armed conflict in the Caucasus region. This entailed providing detailed analysis of the set of on-going protracted conflicts; mapping emerging hot spots across the region and mapping the conflict prevention, mediation and termination initiatives.

Work undertaken

The work package explored how the region's set of protracted conflicts have been sustained and transformed through an exploration of the factors that affect the onset, duration, spread and termination of incidents of armed violence.

We looked at the root causes of inter-ethnic tensions in Georgia during the Soviet period and how these historical issues contributed to the subsequent emergence of violence. In doing so, we paid specific attention to exploring the role symbolic issues, such as the idea of the 'indivisible homeland' and national language, to the warring sides.

Based upon an analysis of former combatants' organisations, biographies and narratives, we also studied the connections between reintegration of former combatants in the South Caucasus conflicts and state-building.

In order to help identify the key factors shaping patterns of violence and non-violent developments, an examination was also undertaken of areas which exhibit conflict pre-conditions but have to date been conflict-free (e.g. the Samske-Javakhetia region in Georgia). This involved analysing conflicting threat perceptions from the Georgian majority and the Armenian minority; and the way in which the minority issue was securitised by the Georgian state as well as external actors.

We then analysed the intersection of localised conflict with the actions of 'external' state and non-state actors, including through peace-building initiatives. This involved a focus on the micro or local dynamics of conflict as well as on broader national and regional factors. For instance, we explored the implications of deep economic integration projects (e.g. Eurasian Union) on regional conflicts. We also investigated the relationship of breakaway regions with their "patron" state, both at a micro-level (by investigating the interdependences between South Ossetia and Abkhazia, on the one hand, and the adjacent

regions of the Russian Federation, on the other hand) and at a macro-level (including through mapping the links of breakaway regions with other external actors).

A further focus of the work package was to undertake an assessment of the impact of peace-building initiatives by state and non-state actors and to identify effective forms of intervention in light of emerging conflict trends

Finally, we studied interrelationships between the various armed conflicts of the region.

Researchers employed a variety of approaches including the mapping of conflict patterns and construction of a conflict data set (including emerging hot spots in the region), the development of biographies of individuals involved in conflict, an analysis of the political economy of conflict, and an examination of the actions of state actors.

Findings

Regarding the root causes of the conflicts in Georgia, contrary to the arguments advanced by mainstream security approaches, our research challenges the understanding of the security dilemma as mainly the result of institutional weakness of the Soviet Union and the ensuing "domestic anarchy", manifesting itself in the late 1980s only. Rather, as the research argues, security dilemma, broadly defined, was embedded in the very institutional structure of the Soviet Union and was unfolding over the course of several decades. We show how Soviet Nationality policies contributed to the development of the "cultural security dilemma" in Georgia and the subsequent outbreak of violence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Our study of former combatants in Armenia highlights a transgenerational transmission of the experience and 'memory' of war. This reflects the fact that the permanent alert status has etched itself into the mind of Armenian society throughout the entire period from 1994 to 2016. Moreover, we find that the young combatants who fought in 2016 use the same type of rhetoric (i.e. the defence of land) that the soldiers in the first war used, many of whom also set off again to fight in April 2016. At the same time, we highlight concrete changes, particularly the institutionalisation of politicians and soldiers, and the developed awareness of participating in an unfinished conflict that has an important influence on political life.

Focusing on privatised and state-like forms of coercion and violence in Chechnya, we show that Chechnya appears to be somewhere between two rationales: the first one is a traditional authoritarian state-building pattern that leaves open the question of how we can refer to state-building when one of the major sources of legitimacy is coming from above, that is to say from Moscow. The second one is a "no war-no peace" political order, that follows the path of many, if not the majority of contemporary conflicts, where boundaries between war and peace have become blurred. We find that even if there can be a long period of time without facing actual armed conflict, collective arrangements and some institutional changes are designed with the possibility of a renewed war in mind. The

institutionalisation and routinisation of anti-terrorist policies in many contemporary societies is part of this process.

In terms of the interconnections between conflicts and the role of external actors, we highlight new linkages resulting from new military technologies and the consolidation of national armed forces combined with geopolitical tensions. In this context, we argue that the main regional conflict risks lie with local triggers starting a conflict that could escalate quickly, and eventually draw in the larger region, and international powers. While some of the protracted conflicts (e.g. the North Caucasus and the conflicts of Georgia) have moved away from 'hot' conflicts, the roots of violence have not been addressed and peace has not been created. Recently however, the links from the Caucasus conflicts to the international level have been reversed as the international level has affected the Caucasus conflict. The merging of elements of the Caucasus conflicts into neighbouring security spaces in the Black Sea and Middle East further compounds the risks within the region.

WP8. The Caucasus and its Wider Neighbourhood

Introduction

WP8 has focused on the role of external actors in shaping the democracy-security nexus in the Caucasus. It has looked specifically at three levels and their interconnections: (a) a national level assessing policies of large actors (the EU, the US, Russia, Turkey and Iran); (b) an international/regional organisation level (with a focus on CSTO, NATO and the Eurasian Economic Union); and (c) a regional geographic level (the Wider Black Sea Area, the Caspian Basin). In addition, WP8 has also sought to bring together policy-oriented, academic and civil society communities with the view to debating the role of external actors in the Caucasus and perspectives in this respect.

Work undertaken

WP8 has sought to connect its object of study (the policies of external actors in the Caucasus) and CASCADE's inside-out approach, premised on an analysis of local perceptions. This connection between external actors and local concerns has structured the work undertaken as part of the WP, whether focusing on energy security, trade integration or security mechanisms (the three main research *foci* within the work package). Research conducted was based on fieldwork in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia as well as interviews with officials in various regional organisations.

Findings

Whether related to energy security, trade cooperation or security mechanisms, our findings highlight the limits of geopolitical approaches that simplify the aims and intentions of external powers, emphasize the rivalry between Russia and the West and relinquish the South Caucasus' states of all agency in shaping their regional environment. By contrast, we shed light on how domestic actors respond to, and contribute to shaping external actors' policies.

Over the past decade, the South Caucasus has emerged as a major transit area for energy flows, in particular to the EU. Using Sovacool's and Mukherjee's analytical framework on energy security policy,³ CASCADE has analysed energy security as viewed within the South Caucasus by a wide range of actors, including governments, energy companies and consumers. We find a discrepancy between South Caucasus elites' declared interest in regional energy cooperation, on the one hand, and their actual energy security strategies

³ B. Sovacool & I. Mukherjee, 'Conceptualizing and measuring energy security: A synthesized approach', *Energy*, 36 (2011), 5343–5355.

that do not seek to develop interdependence, on the other hand. This is because governments regard political and security obstacles as key barriers to energy cooperation, despite its benefits. Thus, they pursue energy security strategies that emphasise either energy independence or dependence on powerful external players (rather than interdependence).

CASCADE has also investigated the initial effects of South Caucasus countries' accession to different trade regimes (the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union and the Deep and Comprehensive Free-Trade Agreement with the EU) in terms of transnational links, focusing on the cases of Armenia and Georgia. In particular, we asked whether the accession to different deep economic integration schemes contributes to increased fragmentation or to renewed cooperation in the South Caucasus. Using the literature on regionalism, we explored how Armenian and Georgian actors responded to the entry of their countries into different trade regimes. We reveal complex patterns regarding whether and how competing external influences shape, through their respective regional projects, transnational links in the South Caucasus. Our findings do not validate the picture of "hard regionalism" that would derive from external actors' interests and rivalry, and that would result in the erosion of trade links among two neighbouring countries that joined different schemes. Instead, we show that (for the time being) engagement into two distinct projects has not affected Armenian-Georgian ties, but rather resulted in the emergence of new modes of interaction that enable groups of domestic actors to push forward their preferences. Thus, we find evidence of emerging regionalisation from below in parallel with (and as a result of) top-down regionalist projects promoted by the EU and Russia.

Regarding security mechanisms, for the extensive external attention it has received, the South Caucasus remains a region without a viable security framework from which meaningful cooperation can occur between Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. What has occurred is a complex patchwork of security structures and instruments developed by Russia and its Western counterparts the EU and NATO. The region has become a principal 'site' in their wider relationship, which has featured both competition and cooperation as both Russia and its Western counterparts confront an increasingly fragmented and unstable external environment. Our research has highlighted the nuances underpinning Russian and Western policies towards the South Caucasus. We have argued that the binary between 'heroes versus villains' in the majority of the existing literature results in oversimplifying a complex regional environment. While the development of a mature regional system of security governance is unlikely due to the disagreement between Moscow and Brussels regarding first-order normative 'rules' of this potential system, this has not precluded the cultivation of a layer of sporadic and pragmatic security cooperation around specific policy issues. This, however, has largely been through 'neutral' organisations and channels offered by the OSCE and the UN in area such as inter-/intra-state violence and counter-

terrorism/narcotics.

WP9. Perceptions and Roles of the EU in the Caucasus

Introduction

Drawing upon CASCADE's inside-out approach, the main objective of WP9 was to analyse perceptions of the EU's role, policies and activities in the Caucasus. WP 9 both extended research conducted under WP 8 in that it looked more closely at the EU's role in the Caucasus and provided a reversed perspective since it focused on how Caucasus actors and societies view the EU. Such perceptions are crucial in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy: given that cooperation and integration with the EU are essentially voluntary for the partner countries, perceptions of the EU shape partner countries' receptivity and openness to its policies.

Therefore, we asked whether the expectations of South Caucasian actors vis-à-vis the EU, and their perceptions of the EU's role performance i match the EU's own conception of its role in the region.

Work undertaken

Using qualitative research methods, WP9 team conducted extensive fieldwork in the North (Dagestan, Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria) and South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh). In addition to discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with officials, representatives of civil society and the private sector across the region. The data was then triangulated with existing surveys on perceptions of the European Union in the Caucasus.

Role theory provided the theoretical framework within which to explore the interplay between the EU's role conception (and, correspondingly, role performance) on the one hand and neighbours' role expectation, on the other hand. We investigated three specific roles that the EU intends to play in the Caucasus: a promoter of democracy, a driver of modernisation and a contributor to conflict resolution.

Findings

Our analysis reveals that in the South Caucasus, the EU's conception as a 'normative power' in both the political and economic spheres only resonates with specific categories of actors, i.e. amongst the political elites in Georgia and Armenia and civil society in Azerbaijan. However, this resonance mainly builds upon what the EU is – a community of democratic states – rather than upon what the EU does. While viewed positively, the EU's own policies weaken its image. The more the EU proclaims its ambitious policy goals, the more it is criticised for either proclaiming them (e.g. by the ruling elites in Azerbaijan) or not living up

to expectations, that is weak role performance (e.g. civil society in Azerbaijan and elites in Armenia and Georgia on specific issues).

Concerning the security dimension, our findings also point to a mismatch between the EU's conception of its role as a security actor in the Caucasus and South Caucasian states' and societies' expectations. The EU's long-term governance agenda and indirect approach to conflict resolution is at odds with South Caucasus countries' prioritisation of conflict resolution. This is due to the fact that the EU has exported its own approach and solutions, based upon its own experience. However, this approach (and the corresponding EU instruments) has hardly coincided with partner countries' initial expectations of a more direct engagement in conflict resolution. In addition, the EU is broadly perceived as a weak actor, unable to contribute effectively to conflict resolution. It is also criticised (especially in Azerbaijan and to some extent in Armenia) for promoting double standards in its policies, in particular in conflict-related statements

While expectations vis-à-vis the EU have been significantly lowered in recent years in Armenia and Azerbaijan, they have also worsened in the breakaway regions. In Abkhazia, perceptions of the EU are crucially shaped by the issue of non-recognition, which is seen as an affront and even a breach of human rights, as it limits Abkhaz mobility options and avenues for development. In Nagorno-Karabakh, expectations vis-à-vis the EU are limited, given that the Union is not perceived as an important actor in the conflict.

To some extent, these worsening perceptions across the South Caucasus can partially be explained by sources of information on the European Union. Abkhaz, Armenians and Karabakhis rely heavily on the Russian internet and television. The image of the EU that they receive is therefore filtered by the Russian media, which largely depict the EU in the midst of crisis (i.e. migrant crisis) or enthralled by episodes that show a generalised loss of direction. In countries where the EU is seen more positively, like Georgia, we find that perceptions of the EU are slightly deteriorating as a result of the media campaigns launched by organisations allegedly backed by Russia.

However, while Russia contributes to undermining perceptions of the EU by diffusing a negative image of the Union and its policies, we find that it is also (even if inadvertently) a source of positive perceptions of the EU across the region. This is due to the fact that across the South Caucasus (including in the breakaway regions), the EU is welcome as a counterweight to Russia.

In the North Caucasus, we find that the EU has emerged as a potential model for the region, together (or in competition) with Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The EU is attractive to North Caucasus citizens especially because of its high living standards and social protection. This

positive image is primarily shaped by travel and/or migration experiences to the EU. In line with their vision of the EU as a prosperous and modern entity, citizens of the North Caucasus would welcome the EU's involvement in local development programmes (for instance in tourism or agriculture). However, the EU's role as a normative power (based upon the diffusion of human rights and values) does not resonate well in the region. Moreover, perceptions of the EU in the North Caucasus have worsened after the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria (irrespective of how respondents see Russia's role in these conflicts).

Policy recommendations

If the EU is to contribute to security and democracy in the Caucasus, it has to become far more (pro)active and visible in the region while at the same time avoiding provoking tensions with Russia in connection with the latter's own regional integration initiatives. To succeed, the EU will need not only a revised set of national policies, but also a path-breaking strategy that can be sustained in the long run. Both in North and South Caucasus, the EU should modify and adapt its policies on security and democracy, migration and mobility, political and economic cooperation and civil society support and increase its peace-building efforts.

The Caucasus is a complex region with unresolved conflicts and rising religious and security tensions. The region is also characterised by recurring political instability and economic crisis. Weak or defective governance contributes to breeding transnational criminal activity, poverty, inequality and corruption. As the countries of the South Caucasus are very diverse, the EU ought to take into account country specific needs and expectations in its promotion of stability and democracy.

Mobility: There is a lack of understanding in the EU about the importance of circular migration as a tool for resolving socio-economic issues in the EU Member States. Therefore, the EU institutions and the Member States should adopt measures that encourage circular migration. To convince reluctant Member States, the European Commission has to make more effort to ensure that third actors, e.g. civil society, businesses and other groups that have an interest in circular migration are represented in the dialogue.

Socio-economic developments in the North Caucasus: Research in the North Caucasus showed that in this particular region the EU's external policy should be focused exclusively on economic cooperation, people to people contacts and promotion of the region as an attractive tourist destination. In regards to economic assistance, for example, the experience of European enterprises in agricultural industry can be useful for North Caucasian small and medium businesses. Thus, SME trainings and workshops might be a first step to start small bilateral cooperation. However, it should be noted that the implementation of the recommendations might be possible only after establishing good contacts within the authorities in the North Caucasus.

Religion and Politics: Religions can play a positive role in democratisation by contributing to inclusion. In both North and South Caucasus religion plays an important role in society by forming attitudes towards new European realms. Therefore, the EU should not neglect religion and the Church while shaping its relations with Caucasus countries. Moreover, the EU should support NGOs and other civil society actors by organising multi-confessional dialogues. The EU's support for initiatives such as training programmes on issues related to

religious pluralism, religious freedom and the neutrality of the state for state officials and actors can be a first step in shaping state discourse on “tolerance” and policies towards religious groups.

Conflicts and peace-building: From the perspective of the democracy-security nexus in the Caucasus, conflicts play an important role in the region. Resolution of those conflicts is a key issue for political stability and economic prosperity. The 2008 Georgia–Russia war provided a particularly strong impetus both to EU and Russian efforts to link the South Caucasus to wider regional projects. In the context of competition from the Eurasian Economic Union, opposition from Russia and the EU’s lack of appetite for enlargement, ‘Europeanisation’ has lost its traction as a means of conflict management and termination. All three South Caucasus countries expect greater EU involvement in conflict resolution. The EU’s approach to the South Caucasus should link more closely the ENP and the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Conflict prevention, management and resolution should both shape and underpin the ENP, which needs stronger Member States’ backing. The EU should also prevent further integration of the breakaway regions into Russia by building a genuinely attractive offer within the political framework of ‘engagement without recognition’.

The Caucasus and the wider neighbourhood: The EU looks to reshape its role in the South Caucasus through reviews of the ENP and the EU global strategy. It should identify effective strategies to resolve the protracted conflicts in the absence of a membership prospect. The EU also needs to take account of Russian factor in its policies vis-à-vis the South Caucasus region. This suggests a pragmatic approach as to how the Association Agreement and DCFTA and the Eurasian Economic Union can coexist in the region. In particular, the EU should ensure that the few regional economic links across the region are not harmed by the existence of incompatible economic schemes in the Caucasus. The basis for external action should not lie in creating a new mini-region within the Eastern Partnership, but in building stronger tailor-made bilateral ties with each of the countries, complemented by a renewed multilateral cooperation format.

Perceptions and roles of the EU: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia have strong expectations from the EU. However, these do not necessarily always coincide with the EU’s vision of its own role in the region. The EU’s long-term governance agenda and indirect approach to conflict resolution is at odds with South Caucasus countries’ prioritisation of conflict resolution. The EU’s conception as a ‘normative power’ in both the political and economic spheres only resonates with specific categories of actors, i.e. amongst the political elites in Georgia and Armenia and civil society in Azerbaijan. However, this resonance mainly builds upon what the EU is – a community of democratic states – rather than upon what the EU does. While viewed positively, the EU’s own policies weaken its image. The more the EU proclaims its ambitious policy goals, the more it is criticised for either proclaiming them (e.g. by the ruling elites in Azerbaijan) or not living up to expectations (e.g. civil society in Azerbaijan and elites in Armenia and Georgia on specific issues).

The ongoing fragility and fragmentation of the Caucasus is not likely to be repaired anytime soon as the region is prone to domestic instability, inflammable protracted conflicts and Russia's extensive influence. The EU cannot and will not take more responsibility in fixing what is broken in the region, but it can have a positive effect on its development, provided that it can design a clearer and firmer long-term vision of its relations with North and South Caucasus countries.

The potential impact and the main dissemination activities

CASCADE is the most comprehensive attempt to date to **de-compartmentalise research on the Caucasus** by exploring linkages between societal challenges, political developments and conflicts and investigating the interactions between the North and South Caucasus, as well as between the Caucasus and its wider neighbourhood. On the basis of a strong comparative and interdisciplinary approach, we provided a more accurate understanding of how democracy and security are perceived, understood, experienced and exploited as political and social resources by Caucasus actors and other actors involved in the region.

While furthering the academic debate and providing new insights on the critical connections between security and democracy in the Caucasus, **the CASCADE project's outcomes have for a large part been policy-driven**. CASCADE has provided forward-looking analysis on regional security and democratisation in the Caucasus. The research conducted has sought to enhance the understanding of regional developments in the mid-term and to explore prospects for Europe in the Caucasus. CASCADE has also spurred debate, networking and exchange of ideas between EU and Caucasian academic, policy-making, expert, media and NGO communities, through regular meetings with these communities and interaction during the project's events. CASCADE was built in such a way that the academic research was developed having tangible policy recommendations in mind through the publication series and outreach effort. Therefore, the project's impact is crucial in the domain of shaping EU policy toward the Caucasus.

CASCADE's dissemination activities

CASCADE's **dissemination strategy** has pursued a twofold objective. First, it has sought to make the findings of the project available **to a wider audience** within and beyond the academic/research community. Second, it has strived to act as **a knowledge hub to spur dialogue and debate** on issues related to security and democracy in the Caucasus and its wider neighbourhood.

To achieve these objectives, the project has sought to engage with, and reach out to a broad spectrum of user groups, and where possible forge links between them. It has addressed **policy communities** (officials, elected representatives, policy-makers) both in Europe and the Caucasus. In Europe, primary attention was given to EU representatives, ranging from members of the European Parliament to EU Council officials and from EU External Action Service officials to their counterparts in the European Commission's DEVCO. CASCADE's findings were also disseminated to officials from EU member states (desk officers Russia and

the Caucasus, security desk officials and democracy, human rights, good governance and rule of law department officials), as well as to elected representatives and government officials in the Caucasus. CASCADE has also engaged with **the think-tank, academic and NGO community**, both in the EU and in the Caucasus. While CASCADE's research has benefitted from an exchange of ideas with EU and Caucasus NGOs and think-tanks in the framework of CASCADE policy events, the project has actively disseminated its publications to the broader analytical civil society community and it has sought to engage this community in building a Caucasus network of experts. Finally, CASCADE has reached out to the **wider public** in Europe and the Caucasus. Through national media outlets, it has contributed to an informed debate on the EU's external action in the Caucasus and the major issues facing the region. This has contributed to an enhanced understanding of the EU's external policy and strengthen citizens' knowledge on the Caucasus and the challenges to which the region is confronted.

To reach out to the different target groups, CASCADE has developed a wide range of **dissemination tools and methods**.

CASCADE publications

CASCADE research has resulted in **a number of scientific publications**, including an edited volume, 3 monographs, 3 set of papers that have been (or are about to be) submitted as special issues to international peer-reviewed journals, and a dozen of stand-alone academic



*CASCADE final event, Paris,
27 January 2017*

articles. In particular, CASCADE's edited volume reflects the project's original and distinctive conceptual contribution to the security and democratisation literatures. CASCADE has also prepared 13 **working papers** presenting the findings of the different work packages. Prior to publication, the working papers were internally reviewed in order to ensure the best possible

academic and editorial standards. The project has also published 3 **policy briefs** that are both short and to the point in order to deliver policy advice readable by a policy-maker. In addition, it has issued a set of **policy recommendations** that were disseminated to the EU and Caucasus policy-makers included in CASCADE's database at the end of the project. The project has produced and disseminated

awareness-raising materials, such as the 5,000 Practical Guidebooks for Armenian labour migrants to the EU. Last but not least, CASCADE has prepared an interactive ***Atlas of the Caucasus*** that brings together maps and analyses of security, governance and socio-economic conditions. The Atlas is published online and includes several series of maps corresponding to the findings of the different work packages, as well as a critical evaluation of sources and statistical data.

The project's findings were presented during a **final event** organised in Paris in January 2017.

They are summarised in a **leaflet** that was disseminated to the 1,400 contacts included in CASCADE's database at the end of the project.

CASCADE academic conferences

Four large conferences were organised as part of the project. They provided an opportunity to present the project's outcomes and to engage academic peers in discussions on both CASCADE's findings and concepts. They also served as a forum for interaction between researchers from different parts of the Caucasus and Europe. For instance, the conference on "Religion and Secularities in the Caucasus" (organised in cooperation with Ilia University and



CASCADE's sister project ISSICEU, Tbilisi, June 2015) gathered scholars from the EU, the Russian Federation, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The presentations covered the whole Caucasus, North (Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Daghestan) and South (Abkhazia, Georgia proper, Armenia, and Azerbaijan). In a similar vein, the conferences "Mistrust, Mobilities, Insecurities" and "Migration, Mobile Goods and Trade Networks in the Caucasus" organised at Jena University in November 2016 contributed to bridging research gaps by exploring under-researched notions such as mistrust. They also offered insights into mistrust and migration practices in both the North and South Caucasus, including the breakaway regions.

CASCADE's **final conference** (21-22 October, Université Libre de Bruxelles) aimed to re-examine the link between security and democratisation in the context of growing authoritarianism and new protest movements, as well as conflict transformation resulting from broader political upheavals in the wider neighbourhood.



*Opening of CASCADe final conference,
Université Libre de Bruxelles, 21
October 2016*

This re-examination was informed by a combination of macro- and micro-approaches and the various panels represented at the conference mirrored well the true (academic) diversity of the CASCADe project itself. The conference featured **11 panels with 36 paper**

presentations and up to 60 presenters, chairs and discussants. The conference was attended by **up to 200 people** from the European Union, Russia, South Caucasus countries, the US and Canada.

CASCADe policy-oriented workshops

Six policy events were organised during the project, some of them as joint seminars connecting aspects of different work packages, thus furthering the coherence of the project. They took place in both European capitals and in the Caucasus and gathered academic and policy-oriented experts, policy-makers, and civil-society representatives. They offered an opportunity to present ongoing CASCADe research and to exchange views with participants.

For instance, the policy workshop **“New Trajectories of Integration in the Caucasus: The Challenges for Conflict and Security”** (Tbilisi, June 2015) brought together leading experts and policy makers from the EU, Russia and the Caucasus to explore how the implementation of new forms of international economic and political cooperation (Eurasian Union/Customs Union, Eastern Partnership/Association Agreement) are affecting security and conflicts in the Caucasus. Speakers included the Georgian State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic integration David Bakradze, and the First State Deputy Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia. Ketevan Tsikhelashvili.



Amb. Natalia Sabanadze and EEAS Director for Russia and Eastern Partnership Gunnar Wiegand, CASCADe workshop, Brussels, October 2015

Opened by the Georgian Ambassador Natalia Sabanadze, the Brussels workshop **“The role of external actors in South Caucasus development and security”** (Georgian Embassy to the EU, Brussels, October 2015) focused on the dense web of interdependences around the South Caucasus and external actors’ interests in the region. These issues were addressed by Gunnar Wiegand, Director for Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional Cooperation and OSCE at the EEAS, as well as by a range of experts



Amb. Mayr-Harting and CASCADe researcher Neil Melvin, CASCADe-ISSICEU final policy event October 2016

from the EU, Turkey and the Caucasus. The seminar gathered over **90 participants from EU institutions, Member States representations, academia and NGOs.**

CASCADe's final policy event "The European Union and the Caucasus: New Perspectives on an Evolving Relationship", organised jointly with ISSICEU at the Swedish Permanent

Representation to the EU (Brussels, 18 October 2016) was designed to bring together leading policy makers and experts to discuss and reflect upon some of the main findings of the projects' research work, related in

particular to the issues of conflict and migration. Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting (Managing Director, Europe and Central Asia, EEAS) underlined the evolution of the EU's involvement with the region toward increased differentiation. He also emphasised that the EU is not pressing any of its partners to choose between EU and other formats and countries (Russia) of cooperation.

Participation of CASCADe researchers in international events and publications

Throughout the project, CASCADe researchers delivered **some 25 presentations at international conferences worldwide.** These included the Convention of the International Political Science Association, Montréal (IPSA), July 2014; the ninth Congress of ICCEES (International Council for Central and East European Studies), Japan, July 2015; the International Conference on Public Policy (ICPP), Milan, July 2015; European International Studies Association (EISA), Sicily, September 2015; and the conference of the Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN), New-York, March 2016. In addition, CASCADe panels were organised at the Annual Conferences of the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) in Cork (2014) and London (2016).

CASCADe researchers also took part in some **20 policy events** across Europe and the Caucasus, organised by think-tanks such as Carnegie Europe, the Brussels-based European Policy Centre, Chatham House, the German Marshall Fund and the Rome-based Istituto d'Affari Internazionale.

CASCADe Website

The CASCADe **website** (www.cascade-caucasus.eu) offers a comprehensive overview of the project's activities, including research progress, events and fieldwork. It includes CASCADe publications, e.g. policy briefs and working papers. In the last six months of the project, it has attracted 5,000 unique visitors, of which approximately 70% were new visitors. Visitors come from a wide range of countries, including the EU (the UK, France, Belgium, Austria,

Germany, Italy), Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey and the US. The development of a Russian version of the website has enabled the project to substantially strengthen its visibility in Russia and the Caucasus.

CASCADE media interviews and media exposure

CASCADE researchers have regularly written **opinion articles** for written and on-line media outlets and give **interviews**. Throughout the project, CASCADE dissemination team has made an arrangement with the Georgia-based website Civil.ge in order to publish regular op-eds and interviews with CASCADE analysts. In addition, CASCADE researchers published other op-eds on websites such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Open Democracy or Eurasia.net; and on blogs such as sipri.org and the London School of Economics' Europb blog. CASCADE researchers also gave interviews to local radios and newspapers in all three South Caucasus countries.

CASCADE newsletter

Seven newsletters were issued during the project, with editorials being signed by different Work Package coordinators. These newsletters provided general information on CASCADE's activities. They were disseminated to the contacts included in the database of the project.



CASCADE social media accounts

The active use of **social media** instruments has been an essential aspect of CASCADE's outreach strategy. The project's Twitter and Facebook accounts (gathering 680 and 300 followers respectively) were important tools in disseminating information related to CASCADE's activities.

CASCADE's potential impact

A better understanding of the security-democracy nexus

CASCADE's **academic impact** has been in reconceptualising **the security-democracy nexus and shedding light on the interaction between democracy and security in the Caucasus**. The project's comprehensive approach to security, innovative thinking on conflicts and democratisation processes in the Caucasus and systematic investigation of the intersection between democracy and security has



CASCADE meeting, Paris, September 2014

enabled us to generate new and important insights.

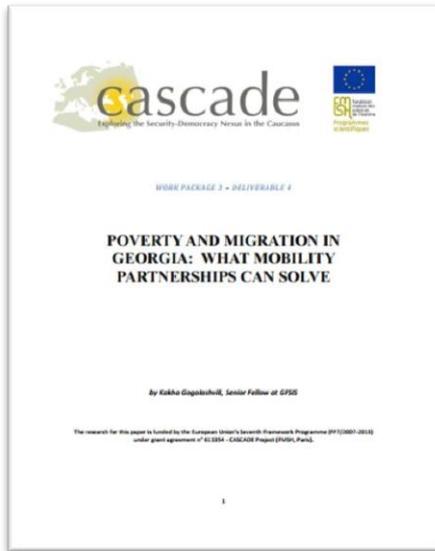
Based upon a strong interdisciplinary approach, CASCADE research has shown the various levels of security (regional, inter-state and intra-state) can play out differently. Even though the inter-state and region-wide levels have attracted most scholarly attention, CASCADE has demonstrated that investigating internal, or intra-state, processes is crucial to a fuller

understanding of security/insecurity and democracy/authoritarian dynamics in the Caucasus.

A better understanding of interactions in and around the region

While the two parts of the Caucasus have mostly been analysed separately, CASCADE has analysed the fragmentation and divisions, but also the interrelations and similarities between the North and South Caucasus. This was made possible by the composition of the research team, which included on an equal basis specialists on both parts of the Caucasus. CASCADE has more specifically studied the linkages between conflicts in the northern and southern parts of the Caucasus. It has also gone beyond EU-Caucasus relations and looked at other key neighbouring countries and regions (from Turkey and Iran to Central Asia, from the Black Sea area to the Caspian Sea basin).

CASCADE has also sought to develop exchanges of views and comparisons between the North and South Caucasus. For instance, the workshop "Local Modernisation Initiatives" (Yerevan, January 2017) offered an opportunity to compare developments in Russia, Armenia and Georgia and to highlight similarities in local modernisation processes.



Bring together academic and expert communities from Europe and the Caucasus

CASCADE has also sought to create a **bridge to actors in the region** by bringing academics and experts from Europe and the Caucasus together in a **Caucasus network**. This was premised on the strong belief that CASCADE, as a first FP7 project focusing exclusively on the Caucasus should result in a broader network that is built to last far beyond the project's timeline. An initial network was established at the beginning of the project and subsequently expanded, based upon a systematic mapping of researchers, institutions and networks specialising on the Caucasus worldwide.

Building the Caucasus network is an ongoing effort that will be extended **well beyond CASCADE's lifetime**. The network is meant to act as a knowledge hub on the Caucasus. It will serve as an **overarching framework** for existing initiatives.

Shaping EU policy toward the Caucasus

CASCADE was premised on an inside-out approach that started from an analysis of Caucasian societies and states. Accordingly, the project has sought to bring a Caucasus perspective to the broader debates about the relationship between Europe and the Caucasus region.

During the project, CASCADE's impact in terms of shaping EU policy has been channelled through developing interactions with policy-makers during the project's policy events and disseminating the policy briefs published by CASCADE researchers as part of the project or in other frameworks.

CASCADE has also delivered a **final set of recommendations** to the EU on how best to enhance its role and contribute to the resolution of security challenges in the region.