ბათუმის შოთა რუსთაველის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

II საერთაშორისო კონფერენცია: ახალი ჰორიზონტები 2026

რეგიონული თანამშრომლობის გაძლიერება აღმოსავლეთის პარტნიორობის, სამხრეთ კავკასიისა და ცენტრალური აზიის ქვეყნებს შორის

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

2nd International Conference: NEW HORIZONS 2026

Strengthening Regional Cooperation Across the Eastern Partnership, South Caucasus & Central Asia

15 - 16 ოქტომბერი 2026 | ბათუმი, საქართველო
15 - 16 October 2026 | Batumi, Georgia

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The International Conference "New Horizons: Strengthening Regional Cooperation Across the Eastern Partnership, South Caucasus & Central Asia" is an international academic and professional platform designed to bring together scholars, researchers, policy practitioners, representatives of public institutions, civil society organisations, international partners, and young professionals from different countries and regions.

The idea of "New Horizons" was conceived in the United Kingdom during Dr. Giga Phartenadze's participation in the 2024/25 Just Society Trust Wider Europe and Central Asia Fellowship Programme. The experience of engaging with policymakers, universities, public institutions, civil society leaders, and youth organisations in the United Kingdom inspired the creation of a platform that could connect different regions and professional communities through academic dialogue, exchange of experience, and long-term institutional cooperation.

This idea subsequently evolved into the International Conference "New Horizons," whose inaugural edition was held in Batumi in 2025. Building on that experience, the second edition takes place at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University on 15 - 16 October 2026, further developing the conference as a sustainable international platform rather than a one-time academic event.

At its core, "New Horizons" seeks to strengthen dialogue and cooperation across the Eastern Partnership, South Caucasus, Central Asia and the wider European space. The conference provides an interdisciplinary environment in which academic research can interact with policy experience and professional practice, while participants from different institutional, national and disciplinary backgrounds can exchange perspectives on challenges that increasingly transcend national borders.

The 2026 conference is structured around six interconnected thematic areas: Public Governance, Engagement and Public Services; Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance; Green Transition and Sustainable Development; Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea; Youth Engagement in Public Policy; and Migration, Identity and Culture. Together, these themes reflect the complexity of contemporary regional transformation and the need for approaches that connect governance, technology, sustainability, security, participation, and society.

The author and initiator of the "New Horizons" Conference is Dr. Giga Phartenadze, Associate Professor at Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, who is responsible for its overall academic and organisational coordination.

CONFERENCE THEMATIC AREAS

The 2nd International Conference "New Horizons: Strengthening Regional Cooperation Across the Eastern Partnership, South Caucasus & Central Asia" is structured around six interconnected thematic areas reflecting key contemporary challenges and opportunities across the regions represented at the conference.

I. PUBLIC GOVERNANCE, ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES
Exploring democratic governance, public administration, institutional accountability, citizen engagement, public-sector reform, and the development of effective, transparent, and responsive public services.

II. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DIGITAL GOVERNANCE
Examining the transformative role of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in public administration, policymaking, communication, regional connectivity, and service delivery, alongside emerging legal, ethical, human-rights, and accountability challenges.

III. GREEN TRANSITION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Addressing climate resilience, sustainable development, renewable energy, environmental governance, green economic transformation, sustainable transport and urban development, and cross-sectoral approaches to a more resilient and sustainable future.

IV. REGIONAL SECURITY, THE BLACK SEA AND THE CASPIAN SEA
Focusing on the changing security and geopolitical environment of the South Caucasus and the wider Black Sea–Caspian region, including regional cooperation, conflicts and their transformation, strategic connectivity, energy and transport corridors, and the role of international and regional actors.

V. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC POLICY
Highlighting young people as active participants in democratic governance and public policymaking, with particular attention to civic participation, digital mobilization, institutional mechanisms for youth engagement, and opportunities for meaningful youth influence on decision-making.

VI. MIGRATION, IDENTITY AND CULTURE
Exploring migration and diaspora communities, cultural and national identity, integration and acculturation, language, religion, historical memory, media and communication, and the ways in which mobility and social transformation reshape identities and communities.

Together, these six thematic areas provide the intellectual framework of New Horizons 2026, connecting governance, technology, sustainability, security, youth participation, migration, and culture within a shared platform for cross-regional academic and professional dialogue.

The views and opinions expressed in the abstracts are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Conference Organizing Committee or Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. Authors are responsible for the content, accuracy and academic integrity of their submitted materials.

კონფერენციის მხარდამჭერები | CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS

ბათუმის შოთა რუსთაველის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი
Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

აჭარის ავტონომიური რესპუბლიკის განათლებისა და სპორტის სამინისტრო
Ministry of Education and Sport of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara

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კონფერენციის სამუშაო ენები | WORKING LANGUAGES

ქართული | Georgian
ინგლისური | English

რეგლამენტი | PRESENTATION FORMAT

მოხსენება | Presentation: 7–10 წუთი / minutes;
კითხვა-პასუხი და დისკუსია | Q&A & Discussion: 3–5 წუთი / minutes.

კონფერენციის საორგანიზაციო კომიტეტი | CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

გიგა ფარტენაძე | Giga Phartenadze
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გვანცა დავითაძე | Gvantsa Davitadze
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თამთა ვარშანიძე | Tamta Varshanidze
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Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

ნონა ბაბაიანი | Nonna Babayan
სომხეთის ამერიკული უნივერსიტეტი
American University of Armenia

ირინა ცინცაძე | Irina Tsintsadze
ბათუმის შოთა რუსთაველის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი
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მადონა თებიძე | Madona Tebidze
ბათუმის შოთა რუსთაველის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი
Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Welcome to Batumi - Welcome to New Horizons 2026!

Dear Colleagues, Friends, and Participants of New Horizons 2026,

It is difficult for me to describe in purely formal words what it means to welcome you to the 2nd International Conference "New Horizons: Strengthening Regional Cooperation Across the Eastern Partnership, South Caucasus & Central Asia."

For me, New Horizons has never been simply another academic conference. It began as an idea a belief that Batumi could become a meeting place where people from different countries, institutions, professions and generations could come together, speak openly, exchange knowledge, and discover how much we can learn from one another.

That idea was born in the United Kingdom. Conversations with people I met there, visits to institutions and universities, and encounters with individuals committed to making a difference in their communities made me think about what we could create back home. I returned to Georgia with the conviction that we needed a platform capable of connecting regions that are geographically distant, yet increasingly linked by common challenges, aspirations and responsibilities.

In 2025, that idea became a reality in Batumi.

And today, seeing New Horizons 2026 return for its second edition is deeply meaningful to me.
What makes this conference particularly special is not simply the number of presentations or the diversity of its academic themes. It is the people behind them.

People travelling from different parts of the world, carrying different experiences, academic traditions, professional backgrounds and perspectives, are meeting here in Batumi around one shared table.

There is something powerful in that.
At a time when distance, division and uncertainty can so easily separate societies, we are choosing something different: to meet, to listen, to exchange ideas, and to build connections - This is precisely the spirit in which New Horizons was created.

Because conferences end. Connections must continue.
To every person who decided to become part of New Horizons 2026 - thank you.

Thank you for bringing your knowledge, your experience, your questions and, most importantly, your willingness to engage with others. Thank you to our colleagues, partners and friends who believed in this idea and helped it grow from a conversation into an international platform.

What began as an idea during a fellowship journey has now brought people from America to Central Asia together in Batumi.
For me, that is perhaps the most meaningful expression of what New Horizons stands for.
May these two days open not only new discussions, but new relationships, new partnerships and, indeed, new horizons.

With respect,

Dr. Giga Phartenadze | Founder & Conference Coordinator | Associate Professor

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2	**Fati Khalvashi**	Parliamentary Oversight in the Context of Contemporary Challenges to Political Accountability and Democratic Governance	I. Public Governance, Engagement and Public Services
3	**Nugzar Phutkaradze**	Administrative Real Acts and Administrative Silence in Public Administration	I. Public Governance, Engagement and Public Services
4	**Givi Abashidze**	The Jury Trial System in Georgia and Legislative Flaws in Its Operation	I. Public Governance, Engagement and Public Services
5	**Tamta Varshanidze**	The Silk Road and New Mechanisms of Regional Cooperation – Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence, Digital Technologies, and Georgia's Strategic Role	II. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance
6	**Omar Phartenadze**	Artificial Intelligence in Modern Criminalistics: Opportunities, Risks, and Legal Safeguards	II. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance
7	**Ioseb Shotadze**	Algorithmic Decision-Making and the Principle of Equality: New Forms of Discrimination in the Age of Artificial Intelligence	II. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance
8	**Tinatin Zakarashvili, Tamari Narindoshvili & Rusudan Machaidze**	Artificial Intelligence and Media Transformation in Georgia: From Journalistic Practice to Digital Governance	II. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance
9	**Madona Tebidze**	The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Public Administration and Legal Challenges	II. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance
10	**Gular Pashayeva**	Bridging Digital Governance and Sustainable Finance in Regional Cooperation	II. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance
11	**Kamran Khan**	A Multidimensional Green Transition Framework for Georgia: Energy, Transport, Industry, Agriculture, and Urban Sustainability	III. Green Transition and Sustainable Development
12	**Nonna Babayan**	From Silos to Synergies: Rethinking the Green Transition	III. Green Transition and Sustainable Development
13	**Giga Pertia**	Green Transformation as a Factor for Improving the Financial Condition and Competitiveness of Small Enterprises: Empirical Evidence	III. Green Transition and Sustainable Development
14	**Tinatin Giorgadze**	Sustainable Development Indicators in the National Curriculum	III. Green Transition and Sustainable Development

#	Speaker / Author(s)	Title	Thematic Area
15	**Pablo Ros Peres — University of Murcia, Spain**	Green Transition and Sustainability	III. Green Transition and Sustainable Development
16	**Zurab Meshkhidze**	Decentralizing Climate Action: Leveraging Blockchain Technology for Enhanced Transparency and Efficiency in Carbon Removal and Credit Markets	III. Green Transition and Sustainable Development
17	**Ana Alikadze**	Spatial Revision in the Caucasus: Regional Security Challenges in the Context of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict Transformation	IV. Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
18	**Diana Devadze**	The Dialectics of Separatism and State-Building in Georgia: Examining Identity	IV. Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
19	**N. Mamulaishvili, Partskhaladze & D. Chkhaidze**	Regional Security of the Black and Caspian Seas in the Context of Oil and Gas Transit	IV. Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
20	**Zeinab Asanidze**	The European Union's Smart Power Strategy in Central Asia	IV. Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
21	**Bogdan Cozma**	Anchoring Connectivity in the Black Sea: The Three Seas Initiative and the Limits of Bilateral Partnership	IV. Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
22	**Nora Mamulaishvili & Tina Bazhanova**	Baku Oil Rail Transit for Export to Europe	IV. Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
23	**Inga Surmanidze & Madlena Davitadze**	Interaction of Static and Dynamic Forces on Ship Stability During Continuous Loading–Unloading Operations	IV. Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
24	**Adrianna Szubarczyk**	Mieroszewski's Thought and the Question of Georgia	IV. Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
25	**Emin Jabbarov**	Kazakhstan's South Caucasus Policy: A View from Central Asia	IV. Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea
26	**Ismail Karypov**	From Online Mobilization to Policy Influence: Digital Youth Movements and Public Policy in Central Asia	V. Youth Engagement in Public Policy
27	**Khatuna Muradishvili**	Youth as Political Actors in the Public Policy-Making Process	V. Youth Engagement in Public Policy
28	**Palina Brodik**	Exile as a Form of Local Civic Participation: Belarusian Migrants and Local Democracy in Poland	VI. Migration, Identity and Culture
29	**Anna Varshanidze**	The Black Sea as a Channel of Western Civilization's Influence: Cultural and Social Transformation of Southwestern Georgia	VI. Migration, Identity and Culture
30	**Irine Tsintsadze & Fati Khalvashi**	Migration, Identity and Culture in the Ethical Context of Contemporary Mass Media	VI. Migration, Identity and Culture

#	Speaker / Author(s)	Title	Thematic Area
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32	**Natalia Lazba & Ineza Zoidze**	Muhajirism and the Formation of the Sociocultural Identity of the Abkhaz Community in Adjara	VI. Migration, Identity and Culture
33	**Vakhtang Endeladze**	From Words to Digital Texts: Language, Discourse and Communication in the Digital Age	VI. Migration, Identity and Culture
34	**Marine Itriashvili**	Descendants of Abkhaz Muhajirs in the Structure of Modern Turkish Society and the Phenomenon of Preserving Dual Identity in the XXI Century	VI. Migration, Identity and Culture
35	**Zhuzhuna Gumbaridze, Zeinab Gvarishvili & Nana Mazmishvili**	Identity, Cultural Diversity, and Religious Rights in Academic Migration: From Institutional Neutrality to an Inclusive Environment	VI. Migration, Identity and Culture
36	**Ia Makharadze**	The Role of Communications in the Cultural Diffusion of Georgian Migrants	VI. Migration, Identity and Culture
37	**Maka Dolidze**	Georgian Diaspora Identity and Culture on Social Media	VI. Migration, Identity and Culture
38	**Tsira komakhidze**	"Standards for State Action to Combat Disinformation in the Digital Space and Protect Freedom of Expression"	II. Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance

Thematic Area I - Public Governance, Engagement and Public Service

Banking Sector Reform as Public Governance: Uzbekistan's Experience and Lessons for the Region

Jafar Khidirov, Head of Department at the Center for Economic Research and Reform

Abstract: Over the past several years, Uzbekistan has undertaken one of the most ambitious banking sector transformations in the post-Soviet space privatizing state-owned banks, strengthening central bank independence, liberalizing monetary policy, and opening the financial system to foreign investors and international standards. This presentation looks at these reforms not merely as economic policy, but as a case of public governance in action: how a state modernizes the delivery of financial services, builds public and investor trust, and reshapes the relationship between government, regulators, and citizens.

The talk will walk through the key pillars of Uzbekistan's reform agenda and the governance mechanisms behind them the role of presidential decrees, the growing weight of independent analysis in decision-making, and structured engagement with partners such as the IMF, World Bank, and international rating agencies. It will show how improvements in transparency, competition, and access to financial services translate into tangible public benefits.

The core of the presentation is comparative. Uzbekistan's path will be placed alongside the experiences of stakeholder countries across the South Caucasus and Central Asia including Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan to identify what works, what stalls, and why. Where has central bank independence delivered stability? Which models of state-bank privatization have succeeded? How do these countries balance financial modernization with public accountability?

The presentation concludes with practical takeaways for regional cooperation: shared challenges, transferable governance practices, and opportunities for the Eastern Partnership, South Caucasus, and Central Asia to learn from one another in building accountable, citizen-oriented financial systems.

Keywords: banking reform, public governance, Uzbekistan, Central Asia, South Caucasus, regional cooperation

Parliamentary Oversight in the Context of Contemporary Challenges to Political Accountability and Democratic Governance

Fati Khalvashi, Assistant Professor, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract: In the context of contemporary democratic governance, parliamentary oversight represents one of the most important mechanisms for the separation of powers, executive accountability, and the institutional transparency of public administration. The sustainability of a democratic state depends significantly not only on the existence of formally established political institutions, but also on their actual capacity to ensure effective mutual control among different branches of government, a clear distribution of responsibility, and the protection of public interests. In this context, parliamentary oversight goes beyond the function of merely supervising the activities of the executive branch and is regarded as an important institutional instrument for strengthening the quality of public administration, political accountability, and democratic legitimacy. Its functional purpose is connected both to the evaluation and control of governmental activities and to the protection of public interests in the political decision-making process and the assurance of transparency in governance processes.

The aim of the study is to provide a theoretical and institutional analysis of the relationship between parliamentary oversight and public administration, as well as to assess the political and administrative mechanisms that contribute to strengthening governmental accountability. Particular attention is paid to the main forms of parliamentary oversight, including parliamentary questions, interpellation, committee activities, the consideration of reports, public hearings, and investigative mechanisms. These instruments are examined as important means of political control which, when applied effectively and consistently, contribute to the substantiation of administrative decisions, the responsible management of public resources, and increased transparency in the activities of state institutions. At the same time, the effectiveness of parliamentary oversight depends not only on the existence of legal mechanisms, but also on the political will to apply them in practice, the professional capacities of the parliamentary institution, and the actual legal or political impact of oversight outcomes.

The paper also analyzes the contemporary challenges associated with the implementation of parliamentary oversight, which significantly determine the degree of its effectiveness. These challenges include political polarization, the institutional proximity between the parliamentary majority and the executive branch, limited opportunities for opposition oversight, a shortage of expert and analytical resources, information asymmetry, and the problem of transforming formal oversight into genuine political accountability. These factors may reduce the actual effectiveness of parliamentary oversight and create the risk that oversight mechanisms will become merely procedural formalities or instruments of political confrontation. The independence of oversight mechanisms is particularly important, as under

conditions of political dominance by the parliamentary majority, supervision of the executive branch may become less critical and less effective.

The study is based on institutional, systemic, and comparative political approaches and examines parliamentary oversight as a multidimensional process in which political responsibility, administrative efficiency, transparency, and citizen participation are interconnected. Particular importance is attached to the horizontal and vertical dimensions of accountability, since in contemporary public administration democratic control is not limited to mutual oversight among state institutions but also encompasses the capacities of society, the media, and civil society.

The study substantiates that effective parliamentary oversight is an important determinant of the democratic quality of public administration. Its institutional strengthening requires not only the improvement of legal mechanisms, but also the development of the professional and analytical capacities of parliament, the strengthening of the functional independence of parliamentary committees, improved access to information, and the establishment of effective mechanisms for responding to oversight outcomes. Thus, strengthening parliamentary oversight may be regarded as an important prerequisite for the consolidation of democratic governance, the enhancement of political accountability, and the improvement of the effectiveness of public administration.

Keywords: Parliamentary Oversight; Public Administration; Political Accountability; Democratic Governance; Institutional Transparency.

Administrative Real Acts and Administrative Silence in Public Administration

Nugzar Phutkaradze, Associate Professor, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract: In modern public administration, the activities of administrative authorities are not limited to the adoption of individual administrative acts. Administrative functions are frequently performed through factual conduct an administrative real act while, in certain cases, an administrative authority fails to adopt a decision and remains silent. The central research question concerns the legal nature of administrative real acts and administrative silence, their distinguishing features, and the legal remedies available against them. Particular attention is paid to the criteria for distinguishing an administrative real act from an administrative legal act and to the legal consequences that should arise from an administrative authority's failure to act.

The study aims to provide a systematic analysis of these forms of public administration, identify problems in Georgian legislation and practice, and develop appropriate approaches to effective judicial review. The research applies doctrinal, comparative legal, and systemic methods. It examines Georgian legislation and judicial practice, together with the approaches developed in German and French law.

The main argument is that administrative real acts and administrative silence, despite their different forms of manifestation, may directly affect individual rights and legitimate interests. The factual nature of an administrative real act and the absence of a formal decision in cases of administrative silence should not constitute grounds for limiting judicial protection. Moreover, applying either a uniformly positive or a uniformly negative model of administrative silence to all areas of public administration cannot ensure a fair balance between private and public interests.

The study concludes that a clear legislative definition of the administrative real act and more precise mechanisms for challenging it are necessary. With regard to administrative silence, the introduction of a differentiated model is recommended. Under this model, the legal consequences of silence should be determined according to the specific field of public administration, the potential risks involved, and the interests of third parties. Such an approach would strengthen the responsibility and accountability of administrative authorities, enhance legal certainty, and improve the effective judicial protection of individual rights.

Keywords: administrative real act; administrative silence; public administration; administrative inaction; administrative legal act; judicial review; effective legal protection.

The Jury Trial System in Georgia and Legislative Flaws in Its Operation

Givi Abashidze, Associate professor, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract: The paper addresses the problematic issues associated with the introduction and establishment of jury trial in Georgia, including their activities and functioning. It also delves into the critical and negative attitudes of Georgian scholars towards the jury institution, which has been subject to ongoing and diverse criticism.

Several limitations of the jury trial, including specific legal deficiencies and negative aspects, are highlighted. These deficiencies arise from both the formation and functioning of the jury court, as well as legislative regulations, which hinder the smooth operation of this institution.

In this article, we address some of the drawbacks of the jury trial system and propose potential solutions to the legal loopholes. We highlight diverse perspectives, including our own, as well as insights from esteemed legal scholars.

Key words: Criminal law, Justice, Juries, Verdict

Thematic Area II - Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance

The Silk Road and New Mechanisms of Regional Cooperation – Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence, Digital Technologies, and Georgia's Strategic Role

Tamta Varshanidze, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University; **David Varshanidze,** Georgian Maritime Agency

Abstract: The main research problem lies in the fact that existing models of regional connectivity still rely largely on physical infrastructure, while contemporary economic cooperation is increasingly dependent on data exchange, digital platforms, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and opportunities for digital trade.

The World Bank's research on the Middle Corridor emphasizes not only infrastructure development but also the need for coordinated digitalization, improved data exchange, and the establishment of interoperable systems.

According to UNCTAD's 2025 research, contemporary international trade is increasingly evolving into an economy driven by digital services, data, and digitally deliverable products. In 2025, international trade in digitally deliverable services continued to grow significantly; at the same time, substantial differences in digital capabilities between developed and developing economies persist.

In February 2026, the European Commission published a study addressing the strengthening of connectivity between Europe and Central Asia through the South Caucasus and emphasizing the need to develop transport, trade, energy, and digital connectivity.

Against this background, the main research problem is defined as follows: How can the application of artificial intelligence and digital technologies transform the Middle Corridor and the broader Digital Silk Road into effective mechanisms for regional economic cooperation, trade, and connectivity, and what role can Georgia play in this process.

The objective of the research is to assess the potential of artificial intelligence and digital technologies to strengthen regional cooperation among the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia and to determine Georgia's strategic role within the emerging Digital Silk Road.

To achieve the main research objective, the study sets out the following specific objectives:

To assess the current state of digital connectivity in the South Caucasus and Central Asia; To identify the potential applications of AI in regional trade and logistics; To assess the opportunities for the digital transformation of the Middle Corridor; To analyze Georgia's digital infrastructure and regional

positioning; To identify challenges related to regional data exchange, interoperability, and cybersecurity; To develop a conceptual model of AI-based regional cooperation.

Keywords: Silk Road, Artificial Intelligence, Regional Connectivity, Middle Corridor, Digital Transformation, South Caucasus, Central Asia, Georgia.

Artificial Intelligence in Modern Criminalistics: Opportunities, Risks, and Legal Safeguards

Omar Phartenadze, Professor Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly reshaping the methods used to detect, investigate, and prove criminal offences. In contemporary criminalistics, algorithmic systems can process digital traces, analyse video and audio material, compare facial and other biometric data, identify patterns across large datasets, reconstruct events, and support forensic expert judgment. These applications may accelerate analysis, reduce investigative workload, and reveal relationships that conventional methods could overlook. Yet their evidential use raises distinct legal and ethical concerns.

This paper examines the opportunities AI offers to criminalistics, identifies the risks arising from its use, and formulates safeguards grounded in human rights and fair-trial principles. It employs doctrinal, analytical, and comparative legal methods to assess the relationship between technological efficiency, evidential reliability, and procedural fairness.

The analysis highlights risks of algorithmic bias, false identification, opaque decision-making, unlawful or disproportionate processing of personal data, compromised data integrity, and excessive reliance on automated outputs. Generative AI and deepfake technologies further complicate the authentication of digital evidence and may blur the distinction between genuine and manipulated content. A particular concern arises when a defendant cannot examine the model, source data, error rates, or methodology underlying an AI-assisted conclusion, thereby weakening equality of arms and the effective right to challenge evidence.

The paper argues that AI-generated or AI-assisted results should be admissible only where legality, necessity, proportionality, scientific validity, transparency, reproducibility, and procedural contestability are established. Essential guarantees include independent validation and periodic auditing of systems; documented chain of custody and data provenance; disclosure sufficient for adversarial examination; protection of personal data; meaningful human oversight; reasoned judicial assessment; and an effective opportunity to challenge both the result and the method. AI should therefore operate not as an autonomous substitute for investigators, experts, or judges, but as a controlled decision-support tool that preserves human responsibility and balances investigative effectiveness with fundamental rights.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; criminalistics; digital evidence; algorithmic bias; human rights; fair trial

Bridging Digital Governance and Sustainable Finance in Regional Cooperation

Gular Pashayeva - Deputy Governor / Central Bank of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Abstract: The integration of FinTech ecosystems, cross-border payment infrastructures, and risk-managed digital governance are drivers of regional economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Central Asia.

Central Bank-led digital frameworks specifically open banking, regulatory sandboxes, and upgraded national payment systems can be leveraged to reduce domestic and cross-border transaction costs while strengthening regional connectivity between Europe and Asia.

Azerbaijan's strategic position as a bridge between Europe and Asia relies on more than geography; it requires macroeconomic stability, international trust, and robust digital governance. FinTech solutions act as key accelerators that allow financial authorities to quickly identify business bottlenecks and test scalable innovations. However, achieving seamless regional integration requires a dual focus: pairing technological scalability with rigorous frameworks for anti-money laundering (AML), fraud management, cybersecurity, and AI governance.

Key points to focus on:

Domestic & Regional Synergies: Continuous regulatory evolution developed in close coordination with sector associations serves as the foundation for scaling domestic FinTech solutions into regional market opportunities.

Cross-Border Harmonization: Deepening cooperation among central banks in the South Caucasus and Central Asia through shared working platforms and national payment system growth can effectively tackle high cross-border transaction costs.

Risk-Managed Innovation: Tools such as regulatory sandboxes (including ongoing discussions on cross-border sandboxes) allow authorities to safely test innovations while protecting sovereign data, consumer trust, and information security.

Talent Development: Sustainable digital transformation demands targeted investments in human capital, requiring joint efforts by central banks, banking associations, and universities to foster tech talent, programming competitions, and specialized labs.

Keywords: Digital Governance; FinTech Ecosystems; Cross-Border Payments; Sustainable Finance; Regional Cooperation.

Algorithmic Decision-Making and the Principle of Equality: New Forms of Discrimination in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Ioseb Shotadze, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract: In the contemporary era, the increasing use of artificial intelligence systems in both the public and private sectors gives rise to significant legal challenges, among which algorithmic discrimination is of particular concern. The automated processing of data and decision-making by algorithmic systems creates risks that may result in unequal treatment of individuals or social groups. This issue becomes particularly significant when algorithmic decisions affect fundamental human rights and legitimate interests.

The purpose of this study is to examine the legal nature of algorithmic discrimination and assess it in light of the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Particular attention is paid to the causes of algorithmic bias, the impact of data quality on decision-making outcomes, the challenges of transparency and explainability of algorithmic systems, and the available mechanisms of legal protection.

The research is based on legal-dogmatic and comparative legal methods. It examines European human rights standards and the legal approaches of the European Union in the field of artificial intelligence regulation. Particular attention is devoted to the question of whether existing equality standards can be effectively applied to automated and algorithmic decision-making processes.

The main conclusion of the study is that algorithmic discrimination should be regarded as a contemporary challenge to the protection of the principle of equality, requiring the combined application of technological and legal mechanisms. Accordingly, it is essential to ensure that algorithmic systems comply with the requirements of equality, non-discrimination, transparency, accountability, and human rights protection. Thus, the development of artificial intelligence must be accompanied by appropriate legal safeguards capable of preventing discriminatory outcomes arising from automated decision-making and ensuring effective legal remedies for affected individuals.

Keywords: Algorithmic Discrimination; Artificial Intelligence; Equality and Non-Discrimination; Algorithmic Bias; Human Rights Protection.

Artificial Intelligence and Media Transformation in Georgia: From Journalistic Practice to Digital Governance

Tinatin Zakarashvili, Professor, Tamari Narindoshvili, Associate Professor, Rusudan Machaidze, Assistant Professor

Abstract: In the context of contemporary digital transformation, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital governance significantly impacts media and public communication processes. This study analyzes how AI technologies transform editorial practices and the media landscape in Georgia, as well as the opportunities and challenges they create for digital governance.

The research is based on in-depth interviews with media professionals, an analysis of editorial practices, and observation of the use of AI tools.

The findings encompass three key dimensions:

Practical AI integration: The use of AI in translation, routine content creation, and tailoring content to audience interests;

Professional and ethical challenges: Risks of disinformation, editorial transparency, and authorship;

Democratic potential: The capability of AI to enhance transparency and accountability in the public sector.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in identifying a "technological gap" (Digital Divide) within the Georgian information space: the implementation of AI risks deepening inequality between major media outlets and regional newsrooms, particularly against the backdrop of limited technology access and a deficit in AI literacy.

Georgia represents a specific "hybrid case" where AI boosts media efficiency while simultaneously exacerbating the risks of information manipulation within a polarized environment. Georgia's experience provides valuable insights for regional comparative studies, as well as for fostering cooperation on responsible AI use, digital governance, and information resilience.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Georgian Media, Media Transformation, AI Literacy, Digital Governance

The Use of Artificial Intelligence in Public Administration and Legal Challenges

Madona Tebidze - Asist.Prof, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract: The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in public administration is playing an increasingly significant role, creating new opportunities to enhance the efficiency of state administration, accelerate service delivery, and improve decision-making processes. AI can be applied across various areas of the public sector, including the automation of administrative processes, the processing of large datasets, the improvement of citizen services, and support for managerial decision-making. However, the implementation of these technologies also gives rise to growing legal and ethical challenges.

This paper aims to examine the potential applications of artificial intelligence in public administration and the key legal challenges associated with them. Particular attention is paid to issues such as personal data protection, the right to privacy, equality, the prevention of discrimination, algorithmic transparency, and the substantiation of administrative decisions. Furthermore, it is crucial to determine liability in instances where a decision made using artificial intelligence violates a citizen's rights or causes harm. This paper examines the need to strike a balance between protecting human rights and the effective use of artificial intelligence. The study highlights the importance of human oversight, legal regulation, the accountability of public institutions, and the transparency of technological processes. Ultimately, the successful integration of artificial intelligence into public administration requires not only technological advancement but also the establishment of appropriate legal and institutional mechanisms that ensure both the efficiency of state governance and the protection of citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, public administration, legal challenges, personal data, human rights, algorithmic decision-making, transparency, accountability

Thematic Area III - Green Transition and Sustainable Development

A Multidimensional Green Transition Framework for Georgia: Energy, Transport, Industry, Agriculture, and Urban Sustainability

Kamran Khan - Research Engineer

Abstract: Georgia is undergoing a significant transformation toward a low carbon, resource efficient, and environmentally sustainable development model, driven by climate change commitments, energy security concerns, economic modernization, and increasing integration with European environmental and energy policies. However, the country's green transition remains multidimensional and requires coordinated interventions across energy, transport, industry, agriculture, and urban development. This study proposes a Multidimensional Green Transition Framework for Georgia that integrates these interconnected sectors within a unified sustainability and climate resilience perspective. The framework aims to identify sector specific transition pathways while examining their interactions, synergies, trade-offs, and implications for inclusive economic development.

The energy dimension focuses on accelerating renewable energy deployment, improving energy efficiency, reducing dependence on carbon intensive energy sources, strengthening electricity grid resilience, and promoting sustainable energy security. The transport dimension examines the transition toward low emission mobility through public transportation modernization, vehicle electrification, sustainable infrastructure, intelligent transport systems, and improved urban mobility planning. For the industrial sector, the framework emphasizes resource efficiency, cleaner production, industrial decarbonization, circular economy principles, waste reduction, and the adoption of green technologies. The agricultural dimension addresses climate smart agriculture, efficient water and land management, sustainable farming practices, biodiversity conservation, renewable energy integration, and reduction of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. The urban sustainability dimension integrates energy efficient buildings, sustainable spatial planning, green infrastructure, waste management, urban mobility, climate adaptation, and improved environmental quality.

Methodologically, the proposed framework adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining environmental, technological, economic, infrastructural, and institutional dimensions. It establishes a set of measurable indicators for evaluating Georgia's progress toward green transition objectives and

provides a basis for identifying sectoral vulnerabilities, transition priorities, and policy interventions. Particular attention is given to cross sectoral linkages, recognizing that improvements in renewable energy can facilitate transport electrification and industrial decarbonization, while sustainable agriculture and urban green infrastructure can strengthen climate resilience and ecosystem services.
The study contributes to the emerging literature on green transition in Georgia by developing an integrated framework capable of supporting evidence based policymaking, investment prioritization, technological innovation, and sustainable regional development. The proposed approach can assist policymakers, researchers, businesses, and local authorities in designing coordinated strategies that simultaneously advance decarbonization, energy security, economic competitiveness, environmental protection, and social well being. Ultimately, the framework provides a comprehensive pathway for Georgia to achieve a resilient, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable green transition aligned with long term national and international climate objectives.

Keywords: Green Transition; Georgia; Renewable Energy; Sustainable Transport; Climate Resilient Development.

From Silos to Synergies: Rethinking the Green Transition

Nonna Babayan, American University of Armenia

Abstract: The green transition is often approached through separate sectoral agendas energy transition, waste management, biodiversity conservation, agriculture, tourism, climate action and economic development. While this specialization is necessary, it can also create silos that limit our ability to recognize connections, align interests and unlock the full potential of green solutions.

This presentation explores a different perspective: what if the greatest opportunities for the green transition lie not within individual sectors, but in the synergies between them?

Drawing on practical examples from Armenia, the presentation will illustrate how integrated approaches can generate environmental, economic and social value simultaneously. Although these examples operate at different scales and involve different sectors, they point to a common lesson: environmental objectives do not have to be pursued separately from development objectives. When connections are deliberately identified and synergies are built into policies, projects and institutions, one intervention can generate multiple benefits.

The presentation will use practical examples and a short interactive opening to explore how breaking institutional and sectoral silos can help us move from isolated solutions towards more integrated approaches to sustainable development. It will also consider the role of cross-sectoral collaboration, institutional coordination and shared ownership in turning potential synergies into tangible outcomes.

Ultimately, the green transition is not only about transforming individual sectors. It is about transforming the relationships between them and creating the conditions in which environmental, economic and social priorities can reinforce one another.

Keywords: Green Transition; Sustainable Development; Cross-Sectoral Collaboration; Institutional Coordination; Policy Synergies.

Green Transformation as a Factor for Improving the Financial Condition and Competitiveness of Small Enterprises: Empirical Evidence

Giga Pertia, PhD Student, Caucasus International University

Abstract: The modern global economic paradigm increasingly emphasizes the critical integration of sustainable practices, ESG frameworks, and green investments into core corporate strategies, driven by accelerating climate change, tightening regulatory mandates, and shifting consumer interest and choice toward environmental responsibility. This empirical study examines the impact of green transformation on the financial performance and competitiveness of small enterprises in Georgia. Using econometric regression analysis, the study aims to determine how green investments rationalize small enterprises' operating costs, improve their financial position, and generate competitive resilience in the market. The empirical study results indicate that green investments and sustainable transformation have a statistically significant positive impact on small enterprises' turnover and market competitiveness. The main findings of the study contribute to the ongoing academic discourse on sustainable development and offer practical implications and recommendations for financial institutions and policymakers seeking to promote green entrepreneurship.

Keywords: green transformation, small enterprises, financial performance, competitiveness, empirical analysis.

Sustainable Development Indicators in the National Curriculum

Tinatin Giorgadze, PhD in Linguistics

Abstract: To what extent and in what form are sustainable development principles (environmental, social, and economic dimensions) reflected in the goals, learning outcomes, and assessment indicators of the national curriculum, and are existing mechanisms sufficient to ensure their integration into actual classroom practice?

This paper aims to analyze how sustainable development principles are embedded within the structure of the national curriculum (general competencies, transversal skills, subject-specific outcomes) and to propose quality-assurance-informed recommendations for formulating these indicators in a more coherent and measurable way.

Sustainable development principles in the national curriculum are largely presented in general, declarative form rather than as concrete, measurable indicators, which complicates their systematic assessment at the school level through quality assurance mechanisms (self-evaluation, external evaluation). A clearer link is needed between educational goals and assessment tools so that education for sustainability is genuinely measured rather than remaining at a purely declarative level.

The paper presents a conceptual framework grouping sustainable development indicators (environmental awareness, civic responsibility, critical thinking) alongside the existing structure of the national curriculum, and offers concrete proposals for how these indicators could be integrated into existing school quality-assessment procedures. Three indicators are discussed as illustrations of the framework: Environmental awareness - the student's ability to identify the connection between human activity and environmental impact; measure: a project-based task analyzing a local problem, assessed via rubric. Civic responsibility and engagement - the student's readiness to actively participate in addressing sustainability-related issues; measure: participation in a school/community initiative, documented through a portfolio. Critical thinking and interdisciplinary connections - the ability to connect subject areas (natural sciences, history, Georgian language and literature) to sustainability issues; measure: an integrated task or essay assessing argumentation quality and critical use of sources.

Keywords: sustainable development, quality assurance, national curriculum, transversal skills, educational indicators

GREEN TRANSITION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Pablo Ros Peres, University of Murcia, Spain

Abstract: With the purpose to encourage sustainability and prevent European citizens from suffering the devastating effect of climate change, the European Union adopted in 2019 the so-called "Green Deal". Ultimately, what this initiative aimed to achieve was to make Europe the first-neutral continent by 2050. It is a well-documented fact that green energies diminish greenhouse gas emissions, broaden the energy supply, and lower dependence on volatile and uncertain fossil fuel markets. The future looks promising for green energy sources, which are taking on an increasingly important role, especially in the current context, as governments are trying to identify viable solutions to the energy crisis and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Worldwide, there is a growing interest in and support for green energy sources, a factor that could help accelerate the current energy transition.

The efforts of every country to strengthen the energy sector through the development of green energies will reduce geopolitical risks and disproportionate external costs for society. The large-scale use of green energies will contribute to sustainable development.

However, reaching the expected aims implies an estimated investments of €260 billion/year until 2030, which means roughly 1.94% of EU's annual gross domestic product in 2020. The aim of this paper is to introduce a perspective that attempts to analyse relationships between two exceptionally important and ambitious simultaneous goals of the Green Deal: to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, as well as the Sustainable Developments Goals, all based on the sustainability environmental, economic and social pillars.

This study reveals that the link between these two goals, including the cost-benefit effects for all citizens, ought to be made as clear as possible. Without apprprite understanding and monitoring of the consequences of each action, the achievement of the aims would be subject to high uncertainty. With ongoing global changes and problems within and surrounding the European Union, implementation of the Green Deal without the noted adjustments poses a potential risk to sustainable development and to the European Union unity. Transition to climate neutrality can be sustainable only if supported by conviction and firm commitment and agreement.

Key words: Green energy; sustainable development; energy policies; energy agreement.

Decentralizing Climate Action: Leveraging Blockchain Technology for Enhanced Transparency and Efficiency in Carbon Removal and Credit Markets

Zurab Meshkhidze, GreWeCo: Co-founder

Abstract: The accelerating climate crisis, driven primarily by CO2 emissions, necessitates robust and trustworthy mechanisms for climate mitigation, with carbon credits serving as a crucial market-based tool. These credits grant the owner the license to emit a certain quantity of greenhouse gas (typically one metric ton of CO2 equivalent). The global carbon credit market is expanding rapidly, projected to grow from nearly $979 billion to over $2.6 trillion by 2028. However, this vital system is hindered by pervasive issues, including the complexity and inefficiency of manual carbon footprint calculations, lack of transparency and traceability, and the critical risks of double-counting and fraud. This paper explores how Blockchain technology, leveraging decentralized ledgers, smart contracts, and tokenization, offers definitive solutions to these systemic failures, enabling a secure, transparent, and highly efficient ecosystem for carbon removal projects and credit trading.

Keywords: Carbon Credits; Blockchain Technology; Carbon Markets; Smart Contracts; Transparency and Traceability.

Thematic Area IV - Regional Security, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea

Spatial Revision in the Caucasus: Regional Security Challenges in the Context of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict Transformation

Ana Alikadze

Abstract: The paper discusses the history of the Karabakh conflict and the new geopolitical reality of the post-war Caucasus. The confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as one of the historical states in the South Caucasus region, has a politically tense and complex character. In the 21st century, under the influence of modern regional conflict trends, their political and economic ties have been transformed into a cooperative format. This confirms the relevance of the topic, since, taking into account recent history, the involvement of international actors has become necessary for the restoration of bilateral relations. However, today, the main question remains - would diplomatic reconciliation be possible without personal readiness?! Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to chronologically study and analyze the prerequisites for the end of the conflict and the scenario of future strategic and political relations, which will allow us to assess the prospects for possible action by each state. The main research area covers the Caucasus region, along with global players, which is based on the study of statistical data, official agreements of international organizations, expert interviews, and qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The research results will allow us to assess space as a strategic resource in modern interstate relations.

Keywords: Border Delimitation; Caucasus; Karabakh war; Spatial Revision

The Dialectics of Separatism and State-Building in Georgia: Examining Identity

Diana Devadze

Abstract: Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and along the path to regained independence, Georgia faced separatist movements and civil conflict alongside the challenge of maintaining a constitutional legal order and the country's unity. Modern Georgian national identity has been shaped through the country's multi-ethnic, multicultural structure and centuries of historical experiences with foreign influences. At the same time, the disruption of national identity formation and the rise of separatism in Abkhazia and South Ossetia cannot be explained by ethnic differences alone; they are the result of a climate of vulnerability generated by historical memory, Soviet policies, and post-independence exclusionary nationalism.

This article examines the political and social processes that unfolded in Georgia before and after the onset of the conflict. The study is based on qualitative research methodology, specifically utilizing a case study approach and critical discourse analysis. Within the scope of the research, the speeches, official positions, and mutual perceptions of Georgian political and public figures, as well as Abkhaz de facto leaders and public groups from 1989 to 2000, are examined. The paper aims to demonstrate how rhetoric and narratives impacted the transformation of identity and the intensification of the security dilemma.

Keywords: Georgia, Abkhazia, national identity, state-building, discourse analysis, separatism, 1989-2000.

Regional Security of the Black and Caspian Seas in the Context of Oil and Gas Transit

Dr. N. Mamulaishvili Associate Professor, G. **Partskhaladze** Professor, **D. Chkhaidze.** Professor, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract: The regional security of the Black and Caspian seas is an important problem during transit oil and gas transportation. both from an economic and geostrategic point of view. The Caspian and Black Seas form an important energy and transport complex that connects oil and gas resources with strategic objects in Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

The purpose of the work is to introduce regional security types in the direction of oil and gas production and transportation to the wider scientific community, students, masters and doctoral students. The aim of the work is to familiarize students of oil and gas engineering with offshore and marine technologies, ports and terminals. Their involvement in scientific and research activities, as well as to identify the main risks to regional security based on established traditions and experience.

This issue is especially important for Georgia. The country is a transit link between the Caspian region and the Black Sea. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline is of particular importance for the South Caucasus. It runs through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey and exports Caspian oil to the Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, with a throughput capacity of approximately 1.2 million barrels per day. The Baku-Supsa transit route is also an important one, transporting oil from the Caspian Sea to the Georgian port of Supsa on the Black Sea. In addition to pipelines, railway routes are used. This allows for the transportation of oil and oil products from Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan.

The paper discusses the main threats to regional security:

1. Geopolitical competition. The infrastructure for transporting oil and oil products passes through the territory of several states, so political instability in the South Caucasus directly affects the sustainability of energy corridors.2. Maritime security. The transportation of oil cargoes from the Black Sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits is of strategic importance. In 2024, more than 45,000 ships passed through the Turkish Straits, and in the first half of 2025, they transshipped about 3.7 million barrels of oil and oil products per day. 3. Environmental risks. A tanker accident or damage to an oil pipeline can cause large-scale pollution of the sea. Particularly sensitive to intensive shipping zones, port areas, oil and gas marine terminals, etc.

Keywords: regional security. Oil and gas marine terminals, Black and Caspian Sea, transit, risks and threats.

The European Union's Smart Power Strategy in Central Asia

Zeinab Asanidze, PhD Candidate in History, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract: Central Asia has emerged as one of the most strategically significant geopolitical regions in twenty-first-century international politics, where the interests of energy security, transport corridors, critical raw materials, digital connectivity, and regional security converge. For the European Union (EU), the strategic importance of the region has increased considerably in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the reconfiguration of global supply chains, and the growing emphasis on Europe's strategic autonomy. Within this context, the EU has increasingly relied on a Smart Power strategy that combines normative influence, economic instruments, development cooperation, diplomacy, strategic communication, and partnership-based security policies.

Although the existing scholarly literature on the EU's policy toward Central Asia extensively examines normative power, economic cooperation, and regional connectivity, relatively limited attention has been paid to the transformation of the EU's traditional Normative Power model into an integrated Smart Power strategy capable of responding to intensifying geopolitical competition with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Russia's regional influence, and the strategic importance of the Middle Corridor. This research seeks to address this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the EU's evolving strategic approach to Central Asia.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the EU's Smart Power strategy in Central Asia by assessing its key instruments, institutional mechanisms, and overall effectiveness within the broader context of contemporary international relations, geoeconomics, and regional security. The study is guided by the following research question: To what extent is the European Union's Smart Power strategy effective in Central Asia under conditions of increasing geopolitical competition, and which factors determine the sustainability of its regional influence?

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach combining document analysis, comparative policy analysis, and case study methodology. The empirical foundation of the study consists of official EU strategic documents, including the EU Strategy on Central Asia (2019), the Global Gateway Strategy, and the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, as well as reports published by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The analysis is further supported by data and publications from the OECD, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and recent academic literature. The theoretical framework is

grounded in Joseph S. Nye's concept of Smart Power, integrated with the theories of Normative Power Europe, complex interdependence, and strategic autonomy.

The findings suggest that the EU's comparative advantage in Central Asia derives not from military capabilities but from its capacity to promote institutional development, good governance, educational and research cooperation, green transition, digital connectivity, and sustainable economic partnerships. At the same time, the analysis demonstrates that the effectiveness of Smart Power largely depends on the EU's ability to strengthen strategic communication, expand investment opportunities, and align its value-based foreign policy with the practical socio-economic priorities of Central Asian states. Otherwise, the Union risks losing influence to competing external actors capable of providing infrastructure investment and financial resources more rapidly and with fewer political conditions.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing the EU's policy toward Central Asia not merely as a collection of diplomatic and economic initiatives but as a multidimensional Smart Power strategy integrating normative values, economic interests, geopolitical adaptation, and strategic communication. By advancing a comprehensive analytical framework for assessing the EU's regional engagement, the research contributes to the broader theoretical debate on European foreign policy and offers a conceptual model that may also be applied to the analysis of the EU's strategies in other regions characterized by the interaction of normative influence, economic statecraft, and geopolitical competition.

Keywords: European Union, Smart Power, Central Asia, Policy Analysis

Anchoring Connectivity in the Black Sea: the Three Seas Initiative and the Limits of Bilateral Partnership

Bogdan Cozma, Doctoral School of Economics and International Business, Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE)

Abstract: The European Union's Black Sea Strategic Approach rests on three pillars, security, connectivity, and environmental resilience. The Three Seas Initiative, which has been operating since 2016, shares similar goals. The Approach does not however mention the Initiative as a tool. This paper takes that omission as its starting point and asks a broader question: under what conditions do connectivity projects linking the Black Sea and Caspian basins survive political turbulence?

The paper compares two projects that share a similar design and a similar set of partners but different outcomes. The AGRI liquefied natural gas interconnector, launched through intergovernmental agreement, has not advanced. The Black Sea submarine electricity cable, embedded in European regulatory and financing structures, has moved from declaration to joint venture. The comparison suggests that durability follows institutional anchoring rather than the density of bilateral partnership frameworks.

The paper then applies this finding to the wider corridor. The Three Seas Initiative is a format restricted to European Union member states, but its financing instruments and project pipeline extend beyond its membership. The paper asks what forms of association would allow Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Central Asian states to draw on that anchoring capacity without membership, and whether the current architecture of overlapping European connectivity instruments can support such arrangements. It concludes with the argument that regional cooperation across the two basins depends less on new political declarations than on the availability of institutions capable of carrying projects through changes of government.

Keywords: Black Sea–Caspian Connectivity; Three Seas Initiative; Institutional Anchoring; Regional Cooperation; Energy Infrastructure.

Baku Oil Rail Transit for Export to Europe

Dr. Nora. Mamulaishvili Associate Professor, **Tina Bazhanova** - Batumi Oil Terminal Personnel Training Manager, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University

Abstract: The paper presents promising international projects being built in Georgia, among which the Baku = Tbilisi - Batumi railway project is worth mentioning. 1882. The Nobel brothers made a great contribution to the implementation of which. At that time, the Nobel brothers were working in Baku. Ludwig Nobel wrote from Baku to his brothers, Alfred and Robert, in St. Petersburg: "Among all the possible routes for transporting oil from Baku, I recommend that you choose the route that passes through Georgia, since between these two countries, in addition to proximity, there is a completely unique feeling of friendship and loyalty to each other that has existed for centuries between Azerbaijanis and Georgians. For us, foreigners, this factor is of particular importance. All other routes are associated with much greater security risks, since nowhere are there such favorable conditions as in Baku and Tbilisi, so I am deeply convinced that we should choose this route correctly." For the export of hydrocarbons to Europe, Ludwig's choice was adopted - the transportation of oil was carried out via the Baku-Tbilisi-Batumi route, although it should also be noted that the Rothschilds invested 10 million US dollars in the construction of the railway.

The second stage of the railway construction includes the Tbilisi-Baku railway line, which was put into operation in 1883, the same year the Samtredia-Batumi line was opened. The Caspian and Black Seas were connected by the railway, which facilitated the Russian Empire in the export of Baku oil.

The importance of the aforementioned railway line became irreplaceable, but the volume of transit cargo was hampered by the low throughput of the railway. Which, together with the scarcity of tracks, was hampered by the Surami Pass. To overcome this difficulty, the Nobels decided to build their own oil pipeline on the Suram. From Mikhailov (Khashuri) to Kvirila. Its length was 62 kilometers, the construction of which cost the partnership 650 thousand rubles. This was the first successful construction of an oil pipeline taking into account the greater distance and height. Later, the partnership dismantled this pipeline and used it for other needs of the oil industry. In 1883, the Baku-Batumi railway opened the way for Baku oil to the West. The activity of the "Branobel" factory from 1879 to 1904 was expressed in the processing of 1 billion 195 million pounds of its own and purchased oil. The company owned: oil fields near Baku, in Balakhani, Boshi, Sabunchi and Bibi-Heybat, on the island of Cheleken on the Caspian Sea coast and in Berix (Dagestan region), etc.; the company's subordination included:

seven factories near Baku, in the Black City, warehouses and bases in Russia and France. In Switzerland, Germany and other cities of Europe

Keywords: Baku–Tbilisi–Batumi Railway; Nobel Brothers; Oil Transportation; Transit Infrastructure; South Caucasus.

Interaction of Static and Dynamic Forces on Ship Stability During Continuous Loading–Unloading Operations

Assoc. Prof. **Inga Surmanidze**, Doctor of Sciences in Physics and Mathematics, **Madlena Davitadze** - Batumi State Maritime Academy

Abstract: This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the impact of high-productivity cargo-handling systems used at modern maritime terminals and ports — specifically, Batumi seaport's belt conveyor with a maximum capacity of 1,100 t/h (Belt Conveyor 220-01B) — on a ship's hydrostatic and hydrodynamic stability. The aim of the study is to determine the effect of the physical forces generated by continuous cargo accumulation on the vessel's mechanical stability. To this end, the relationship between the cargo flow velocity (2.3 m/s) and the rate of mass change (305.5 kg/s) and the ship's metacentric height (GM) and righting arm (GZ) is analyzed mathematically and physically.

It is established that the cargo flow falling from the conveyor generates a constant impact force of approximately 703 N, while the accumulation of 183 t of mass on deck every 10 minutes causes GM to decrease by 0.15 m per interval (see diagram). Under the conveyor's minimum working angle (1.3°), the righting arm (GZ = GM·sinθ) decreases from 0.027 m to 0.014 m, confirming that operation at a small angle of inclination significantly reduces the dynamic impact effect on the ship's hull — although it requires continuous monitoring of GM, since the margin of static stability decreases progressively over time.

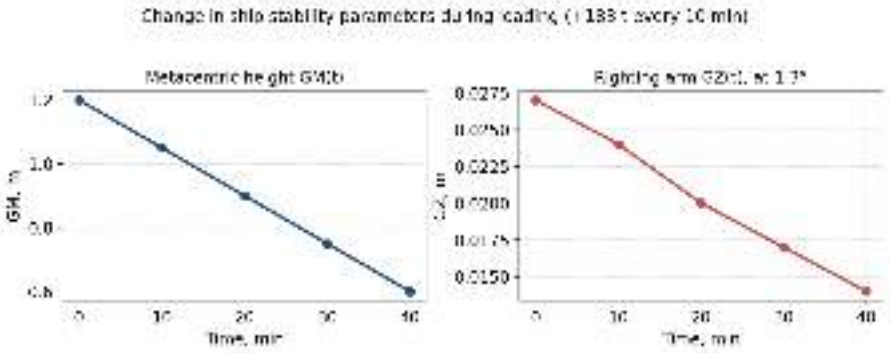


Fig. 1. Change in the ship's metacentric height (GM) and righting arm (GZ) over loading time, for Batumi port conveyor system (θ = 1.3°).

To demonstrate the effectiveness of Batumi port's optimized model, its parameters were compared with those of the world's leading maritime terminals. The comparative analysis showed that, unlike traditional international approaches — where high productivity is achieved by increasing the angle of

inclination (e.g., 10.5°–12°) or the belt speed (e.g., 4.5 m/s) — Batumi port model is based on geometric optimization: the combination of a 1.3° working angle and a 2.3 m/s speed achieves approximately 83% higher productivity, while, according to preliminary estimates, it provides roughly a 15% energy advantage in horizontal transport, thereby reducing the dynamic risks to the ship's stability.

The study confirms that achieving high productivity at maritime terminals is possible only through an integrated physical analysis of the conveyor's geometric parameters and the vessel's hydrodynamic characteristics. For Batumi terminal, it is recommended: real-time digital monitoring of GM and GZ throughout the entire loading cycle; the implementation of automated ballast-system compensation mechanisms in accordance with the 10-minute cycle; and systematic control of harbor depth clearance to prevent the squat effect, particularly during intensive loading operations. The comprehensive implementation of these measures ensures the safe and efficient operation of Batumi International Seaport's conveyor system, in full compliance with the international SOLAS and IMO Code standards.

Keywords: ship stability, belt conveyor, dynamic forces, metacentric height, GZ curve, loading–unloading, IMO standards.

Mieroszewski's Thought and the Question of Georgia

Adrianna Szubarczyk

Abstract: This article reassesses the contemporary relevance of the Giedroyc–Mieroszewski doctrine through the case of Georgia. Formulated within the post-war Polish émigré milieu, particularly around the Paris-based journal Kultura, the doctrine sought to overcome historical antagonisms in Eastern Europe, support the sovereignty of nations situated between Poland and Russia, and challenge the political logic of Russian imperial domination. Its best-known expression was the ULB concept, centred on the independence and sovereignty of Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus.

Although Georgia lay outside the original geographical scope of ULB, the article asks whether the principles underlying the doctrine can provide a broader analytical framework for understanding Poland's contemporary engagement with Georgia. Article considers Mieroszewski's thought beyond the original ULB framework and in the context of Georgia today.

Particular attention is given to the role of the Mieroszewski Centre and its engagement with Georgian society. The article argues that the Georgian case makes it possible to reconsider ULB as a broader political and intellectual legacy: one that offers a vocabulary for thinking about sovereignty, imperial pressure, and regional cooperation beyond the original triad of Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus.

Keywords: Giedroyc–Mieroszewski Doctrine; ULB Concept; Georgia; Polish Eastern Policy; Sovereignty.

Thematic Area V - Youth Engagement in Public Policy

From Online Mobilization to Policy Influence: Digital Youth Movements and Public Policy in Central Asia

Ismail Karypov, Founder & Lead, Ecoadam (digital ecological movement); Country Manager, Earth Journalism Network (Internews)

Abstract: Across Central Asia, a growing share of young people encounter public affairs raises last five years through digital spaces rather than formal institutions. This paper examines how youth-led digital movements – from environmental campaigns to civic-tech initiatives – translate online mobilization into measurable influence on public policy, and why so many stall before reaching the decision-making table.

Drawing on the author's practical experience building and leading a digital ecological movement in Kyrgyzstan and working with youth-empowerment and governance programmes across the region, the paper's main objective is to map the pathways, and the blockages, that connect grassroots youth activism to formal policy processes.

Its central argument is that youth engagement in the region is frequently invited but rarely institutionalized: young people are consulted symbolically, while the mechanisms that would convert their input into policy – standing advisory structures, transparent feedback loops, and protected civic space – remain weak. Digital tools lower the cost of mobilization but cannot, on their own, substitute for these institutional bridges.

The analysis combines a practitioner case study, a review of regional youth-engagement initiatives, and comparative reference to Eastern Partnership and South Caucasus experience. Expected findings suggest that durable youth influence emerges where three conditions coincide: sustained digital organizing, an intermediary able to broker access to institutions, and at least one receptive policy entry point. Where any of the three is missing, engagement tends to plateau at awareness-raising.

The paper concludes with practical recommendations for universities, public bodies, and development actors seeking to move youth participation from consultation toward genuine co-creation, and identifies openings for cross-regional learning between Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and the Eastern Partnership.

Keywords: youth engagement; public; Central Asia; digital movements; civic participation; regional cooperation

Youth as Political Actors in the Public Policy-Making Process

Khatuna Muradishvili, Doctor of Public Administration Assistant Professor at Shota Rustaveli State University of Batumi

Abstract: In contemporary democratic governance, youth political participation has become an increasingly important factor in ensuring the legitimacy, inclusiveness, and effectiveness of public policy. Young people are no longer viewed solely as a target group of public policy but are increasingly recognized as independent political actors capable of influencing policy agendas, decision-making processes, and policy implementation. This transformation is particularly relevant in the context of modern democratic governance, which places growing emphasis on citizen participation, inclusive decision-making, and the representation of diverse social interests.

The study examines the role of youth as political actors in the public policy-making process and focuses on the institutional and participatory mechanisms through which young people can influence policy development and decision-making. The aim of the research is to analyze the major forms, opportunities, and limitations of youth political participation and to identify the factors that determine the transition from formal participation to meaningful political influence.

The central argument of the study is that the formal inclusion of young people in public policy processes does not, by itself, guarantee meaningful political influence. Effective youth participation requires sustainable and institutionally supported mechanisms, the integration of young people's perspectives into policy agendas, meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making, and effective feedback mechanisms. Therefore, assessing youth political agency should go beyond quantitative indicators of participation and consider the actual degree of influence exercised by young people at different stages of the public policy cycle.

The expected findings will identify the principal mechanisms of youth political participation, the institutional factors affecting their effectiveness, and the key barriers limiting meaningful youth engagement. The study will also explore opportunities for strengthening youth participation and propose recommendations for developing more inclusive, participatory, and youth-responsive public policies.

Keywords: youth, political actors, youth political participation, public policy, participatory governance, decision-making, democratic governance.

Thematic Area VI - Migration, Identity and Culture

The Black Sea as a Channel of Western Civilization's Influence Cultural and Social Transformation of Southwestern Georgia

Anna Varshanidze

Abstract: The constant opposition in the history of the west and east humanity is submitted in the form of two different cultural space. This division is of course conditional, because neither of them is ethnically homogeneous space. It`s also important to be noted that western scientists are more interested in studying this issue, what contributed to a greater extent to be submitted the east as a locked space.

Of course, such approach was unacceptable for non-western authors, and it deepened the confrontation more between these two spaces.

Our country has felt the existence of west-east opposition throughout its history. It was sometimes redistributed under the influence of one side and sometimes to the other one. If Georgian culture meets the characteristics of westernization on one place, while in the other place it meets the characteristics of east with the same success, sometimes neither one nor the other one (Kakitelashvili 2000: 51).

From the 19th century onwards, Western states sought to establish intensive trade relations with the wealthy regions of the East via Batumi. This can be explained by the fact that, among the settlements along the Black Sea coast, Batumi was distinguished by its favourable maritime and port conditions. In particular, it possessed a sheltered natural harbour. "The port of Batumi is the only reliable refuge for ships in the eastern part of the Black Sea," wrote Karl Marx (see Chkheidze, 1959: 27).

From the 1850s onwards, as a result of the further development of capitalist production and trade, the commercial significance of Batumi as a port increased. Apart from Batumi, there was no other maritime point along the entire eastern Black Sea coast that offered such favourable conditions for ships to enter and conduct cargo operations in all weather conditions. The English newspaper The Daily News wrote in 1876: "The port of Batumi is the only safe harbour along the entire southeastern coast of the Black Sea as far as Crimea. The water here is sufficiently deep to allow all large vessels to anchor close to the shore; loading and unloading operations can be carried out in all weather conditions. The northern and northwestern winds that reach the Caucasian coast never blow directly onto the shore of Batumi harbour" (see Chkheidze, 1974: 45).

The issue of cultural-political orientation of Georgia is still actual in the modern society. Under the conditions of globalization, it can be said that the geographical perception of the west has itself changed, we mean that, if from ancient times the western civilization for Georgia was associated with Greek,

Roman or Byzantine cultures, today United States of America is considered as one of the main source of spreading the western civilization. The attitude of the society has also changed, some of them still think that the representatives of ancient culture are the main part of the western civilization and they consider that the main centers of western culture are such European cultures as they are: Greece, England, France, Germany and others.

Due to the fact that, the perception of history has somehow changed in modern society and it can be said that different approaches of the perception of history are gradually being introduced, we consider that the research, presented by us, is interesting and actual for modern society.

Keywords: Black Sea, Western Civilization, Cultural Transformation, Political Orientation, Cultural Identity, Historical Perception, European Influence

Migration, Identity and Culture in the Ethical Context of Contemporary Mass Media

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Abstract: In the context of globalization and intensified migration processes, cultural diversity and the transformation of identity have emerged as some of the most significant challenges shaping contemporary societies. The increasing mobility of populations has substantially altered social structures, cultural affiliations, and patterns of civic integration. Within this dynamic environment, mass media no longer functions solely as a channel for disseminating information; it actively constructs social reality, shapes public opinion, and influences perceptions of migrants and culturally diverse communities. Consequently, the ethical dimensions of media coverage of migration have become a central concern in contemporary media and communication studies, as well as in broader interdisciplinary debates within the social sciences.

The aim of this study is to examine the ethical responsibility of contemporary mass media in representing migration, cultural identity, and diversity. The research addresses the following questions: How does the media influence public perceptions of migrants and ethnic minorities? To what extent does media coverage comply with the fundamental principles of journalistic ethics? What role does ethical media practice play in fostering cultural integration and social inclusion?

The theoretical framework integrates contemporary perspectives from media representation theory, cultural identity studies, social constructivism, multiculturalism, and media ethics. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative research approach, combining a systematic review of academic literature with critical discourse analysis and a comparative examination of international media practices. Particular attention is devoted to the role of both traditional and digital media in shaping public attitudes toward migration, as well as to the communicative mechanisms that either facilitate or hinder intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

The analysis demonstrates that media discourses significantly influence the construction of migrants' social image and public understanding of migration-related issues. Sensationalized reporting, stereotypical narratives, discriminatory language, and the dissemination of misinformation contribute to social polarization, reinforce xenophobic attitudes, and undermine inclusive democratic values. Conversely, ethical journalism—grounded in the principles of accuracy, impartiality, accountability, respect for human dignity, and cultural diversity—supports intercultural understanding, strengthens social trust, and promotes democratic participation. The findings suggest that ethical media practices are essential for reducing prejudice and encouraging constructive public dialogue on migration.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which examines migration, cultural identity, and media ethics within a unified analytical framework. By integrating

insights from communication studies, cultural studies, migration research, and ethics, the study expands the understanding of media responsibility beyond professional standards to include its broader role in safeguarding human rights, democratic governance, and cultural sustainability. Furthermore, the research highlights the growing importance of ethical journalism in the digital media environment, where algorithm-driven communication, social media platforms, and user-generated content increasingly shape public discourse.

The study concludes that ethical media responsibility constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for the effective management of migration-related communication, the protection of cultural diversity, and the promotion of inclusive societies. Strengthening ethical journalistic standards, enhancing media literacy, and implementing responsible editorial policies are therefore essential not only for improving media practice but also for supporting evidence-based public policy and advancing future academic research in media, communication, migration, and cultural studies.

Keywords: migration; cultural identity; mass media; media ethics; multiculturalism; social inclusion; cultural diversity; media representation.

The Obligation to Know the State Language and the Language of Education in the South Caucasus Countries:According to the Laws "On the State Language"

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Abstract: All three South Caucasus states – Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia – are actively engaged in legislative activity aimed at protecting and developing the state language as an important element of the effective functioning of the state. The state language is a means that influences the realization of the principles of a state's communicative unity, political consolidation, and the territorial integrity of the country.

Accordingly, a comparative analysis of the issues of state language development, linguistic sovereignty, human language rights, and the relationship between linguistic majorities and minorities in the South Caucasus countries is highly relevant. Such an analysis will facilitate the mutual sharing of experience in language policy among the South Caucasus countries.

This paper compares the legislation of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia on the state language, based on the parameters of the mandatory knowledge of the state language and the language of education.

Using the comparative analysis method, the paper demonstrates that the laws of all three countries establish an obligation to know the state language, albeit with different nuances. The legislation of all three countries also establishes legal regulations concerning the language used in the field of education. All three countries, in accordance with the procedures established by their respective national legislation, permit the possibility of receiving education in a non-state language as well, while requiring the mandatory teaching of the state language in non-state-language educational institutions. Armenia's Law on Language also addresses the issue of training the deaf in the state language.

Keywords: state language, obligation to know the state language, language of education.

Muhajirism and the Formation of the Sociocultural Identity of the Abkhaz Community in Ajara

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Abstract: The paper examines the history of Abkhaz Muhajirism, the causes of relocation, and the specifics of their settlement in Adjara. In the second half of the 19th century, following the end of the Caucasian War and the final annexation of the region by the Russian Empire, thousands of Abkhazians were forced to leave their native land. This process is known in historiography as "Muhajirism." As Adjara was part of the Ottoman Empire during that period, a portion of the Muhajirs settled in the outskirts of Batumi and nearby villages. The main focus of the research is how this historical migration process affected the formation of the Abkhaz community and its sociocultural identity under the new conditions.

The study demonstrates that the Abkhazians settled in Adjara actively sought to preserve their ethnic memory, family ties, language, customs, and religious practices. Kinship structures, family relations, traditional norms of behavior, and intergenerational cultural transmission played a decisive role in this process.

Furthermore, the development of the community took place under conditions of close relations with the local population. Shared confessional (Islamic) affiliation significantly contributed to rapid and peaceful integration into the local environment. This interaction led to a mutual cultural exchange; however, it did not erode the community's ethnic foundation, but rather facilitated its social adaptation. The Abkhaz community managed to preserve its ethnocultural identity through intra-family traditions, language, and norms of endogamous marriage.

The paper notes that Abkhazians living in Adjara are characterized by a synthesis of preserving traditional identity and adapting to the local social environment without assimilation. It was precisely this combination of traditionalism and mobility that became the foundation for the formation of their sociocultural phenomenon and determined the specifics of community life. Consequently, a unique ethnocultural group emerged in Adjara that harmoniously combines its ethnic roots with full integration into the local Georgian society.

Keywords: Abkhaz Muhajirism; Adjara; Ethnocultural Identity; Migration and Integration; Sociocultural Adaptation.

From Words to Digital Texts: Language, Discourse and Communication in the Digital Age

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Abstract: The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed the forms of language use, communicative practices, and mechanisms of discourse production. In the contemporary world, the concept of the word extends beyond its traditional oral and written manifestations and evolves into a complex digital text that integrates linguistic, visual, and technological components. These processes raise important scholarly questions concerning language transformation, emerging forms of discourse, communicative strategies, and linguistic changes within digital environments.

The aim of this study is to examine the major directions of linguistic and communicative transformation in the digital age and to analyze how technological environments influence the nature of text, forms of speech, and contemporary discourse practices. Particular attention is devoted to digital text as a distinctive form of modern communication that combines the structural characteristics of traditional linguistic systems with new communicative possibilities generated by digital media.

The central argument of the study is that the digital environment does not merely alter the modes of language use; rather, it creates a new discursive reality in which linguistic units, textual structures, and patterns of interaction among communication participants acquire new functions and meanings. Digital communication should not be viewed solely as a technological extension of traditional forms of writing; instead, it represents a new stage in the development of language characterized by interactivity, multimodality, and dynamic processes of transformation.

The expected outcomes of the research include a systematic understanding of contemporary linguistic processes, the identification of the key features of digital discourse, and the exploration of the factors shaping language change in technologically mediated environments. The study aims to contribute to the advancement of modern linguistic research and provide further insights into the complex relationship between language, communication, and digital culture.

Keywords: language transformation; digital text; contemporary discourse; digital communication; linguistic change; multimodality; discourse analysis; language and technology.

Descendants of Abkhaz Muhajirs in the Structure of Modern Turkish Society and the Phenomenon of Preserving Dual Identity in the XXI Century

Marine Itriashvili , Associate Professor

Abstract: This study examines the historical trajectory and contemporary position of the Abkhaz diaspora in the Republic of Turkey. The research aims to reveal the mechanisms through which nineteenth century events influence the social life and identity of the community in the twenty first century. The paper traces the process of Muhajirism to the Ottoman Empire during the Caucasian War, the settlement patterns across Anatolian provinces, and the subsequent integration of Abkhaz Muhajirs into the state, economic, and cultural institutions of modern Turkey.

Based on sociological observations, field studies, archival documents, and an analysis of diaspora organizations, including the Federation of Abkhaz Cultural Associations and urban community groups, the internal mechanisms of ethnocultural self organization are disclosed. The historical memory of Muhajirism is described as an evolving phenomenon that transitioned from a severe collective trauma into a conscious resource for preserving ethnic uniqueness.

The concept of dual identity occupies a central place in the research. This approach explains the harmonious combination of civic loyalty to the Turkish state with commitment to traditional values, native language, and historical roots. The article also analyzes the shift from traditional living in isolated Anatolian villages to active participation of the diaspora in the life of major metropolises such as Istanbul, Ankara, Bursa, Sakarya, and Duzce.

As a result of the study, it is concluded that the Abkhaz diaspora in Turkey has succeeded in building a flexible social model that enables individuals to adapt successfully to life in modern metropolises without losing their ethnocultural roots.

Keywords: Abkhaz Diaspora; Turkey; Muhajirism; Dual Identity; Ethnocultural Self-Organization.

Exile as a form of local civic participation: Belarusian migrants and local democracy in Poland

Palina Brodik

Abstract: The large presence of Belarusians in Poland has created a new civic reality for local communities. Since 2020, Belarusians have built a dense infrastructure of civil society organisations, mutual assistance networks, cultural initiatives and advocacy groups. Yet most of this energy stays oriented toward Belarus and circulates within Belarusian communities themselves.

Many people in exile still see their stay as temporary. Uncertainty about the future, limited knowledge of local institutions, language barriers, and prior experience of centralised governance all make participation in Polish local democracy feel like a less obvious step. So the question becomes: how does existing civic capacity become part of the democratic life of the communities where Belarusians now actually live?

Migrants are usually seen through one of two lenses as labour, or as a source of cultural diversity. Both matter, but both miss a third dimension: the migrant as civic actor. Belarusians arrive with real experience in grassroots organising, volunteering, advocacy, and community mobilisation. Local self-government offers a natural place for that experience to meet institutional democracy through consultations, participatory budgeting, local initiatives, volunteering, cooperation with municipal authorities.

This isn't just an integration tool. It can become a two-way exchange: municipalities gain from the civic resources newcomers bring, and Belarusians gain firsthand experience of institutional participation and local decision-making.

There's also a wider social effect. Taking part in local decision-making, working on shared problems, becoming visible as contributors rather than dependents this can narrow social distance and push back against xenophobic narratives, especially in a climate where migration gets discussed mostly in terms of labour, welfare, or cultural difference. The task isn't only to make local democracy more accessible to Belarusians. It's to recognise their participation as something municipalities themselves gain from.

The stakes may reach further than Poland. Many Belarusians in exile expect to take part in Belarus's democratic transformation when it comes. Experience of functioning local government institutional accountability, citizen participation, everyday cooperation between residents and public authorities is exactly the kind of democratic practice they could carry back. Seen this way, the Belarusian case in Poland is a live test of something broader: whether local democracy can become a space of partnership with exile communities not just as workers or carriers of cultural diversity, but as civic actors with real resources to offer democratic resilience.

Keywords: Belarusian Diaspora; Local Democracy; Civic Participation; Migrant Integration; Democratic Resilience.

"Identity, Cultural Diversity, and Religious Rights in Academic Migration: From Institutional Neutrality to an Inclusive Environment"

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Abstract: Contemporary academic migration in the higher education space of the South Caucasus is generating a multicultural environment in which the intersection of diverse ethnic and religious identities gives rise to new institutional and social challenges. This study examines the integration and identity-construction strategies of international students, drawing on a case study of Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University (BSU).

The research adopts a qualitative-empirical approach: alongside a discourse analysis of legislative and institutional documents, a purposive survey was conducted among BSU's international students (N=40; drawn from 110 distributed questionnaires, a response rate of 36%), together with 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews, whose qualitative analysis forms the core analytical basis for interpreting the findings. The sample includes representatives of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian traditions. The relevance of the research context is further heightened by the fact that academic migration here intersects with Adjara a region with a historical legacy of Muslim-Christian coexistence where newly emerging international religious diversity is layered onto an already existing local multi-religious landscape.

The study's theoretical framework rests on the concept of "lived religion," used to examine the gap between formal norms and everyday practice; Berry's model of acculturation, employed to typologize students' integration strategies; and the principle of "reasonable accommodation," serving as a bridge between institutional neutrality and inclusion.

From a legal perspective, the Law of Georgia on Higher Education (Article 3), the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, and BSU's Code of Ethics and Internal Regulations establish institutional neutrality and prohibit discrimination. This framework is analyzed in relation to Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (in conjunction with Article 14 and Protocol No. 12) and the case law of the Strasbourg Court: Eweida and Others v. the United Kingdom (the duty of accommodation); Leyla Şahin v. Turkey (the balance between institutional autonomy and religious expression); and S.A.S. v. France (the limits of restrictions in public space).

The empirical findings reveal a gap between formal guarantees and everyday experience: 85% of respondents (34 of 40) lack complete information about their religious rights within the university space, while 25% (10 of 40) report uneven cultural sensitivity on the part of administrative and academic staff. The interviews complement this quantitative picture, indicating that the gap stems primarily from informational asymmetry and procedural opacity rather than from a direct restriction of rights. In addition, a clear demand emerges for multifaith prayer and reflection spaces, which encounters administrative and structural constraints at the university level. Given the sample size, the findings are treated as exploratory rather than statistically generalizable results.

The study concludes that building an inclusive university environment requires moving beyond passive neutrality toward proactive "reasonable accommodation" at the levels of information accessibility, staff competence, and spatial resources. The BSU case is presented as a potentially transferable model for other universities in the region experiencing growing academic migration.

Keywords: academic migration; lived religion; reasonable accommodation; institutional neutrality; Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights; inclusive education.

The role of communications in the cultural diffusion of Georgian migrants

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Abstract: The present study deals with the role of communications in the adaptation of Georgian migrants to the new culture, assimilation, preservation of their identity in parallel with the adaptation to the new environment and acculturation. And also the hybrid, dual identity of the next generation of Georgian emigrants, which connects them to two different cultural worlds. In this regard, as a construct, the cultural diffusion of migrants consists of many aspects: Georgians bring with them national values, traditions, music, dance, literature, cuisine, linguistic elements and art to the receiving countries. The relevance of the study is due to the fact that within the framework of the work, it is examined how the Georgian emigrant tries to adopt the surrounding culture, norms, values, traditions of the society in the process of integration, to form the repertoire of values and actions that correspond to his environment. It also focuses on and discusses the interdependent and value conflicts that can arise in emigration. In the cultural dimension, the discussion of the issue of the Georgian diaspora emphasizes the notion of hybridity: this term is used as an evolution of a new social dynamic generated in the form of mixed cultures of Georgian emigrants. It's one of the best ways to engage citizens, to engage them personally in peacemaking. This cultural dialogue helps bring countries closer together, reduces tensions, and reduces the likelihood of potential war. In the context of diasporic hybridity, "Georgian roots" is seen as one of the most important metaphorical designations, as a continuous process that extends in all directions from a point in different countries, creating a complex network of unpredictable shapes that are in a constant process of growth. It also aims to measure the role of various technological communication tools in the cultural diffusion of Georgian migrants. The main conclusion of the study is to examine the influence of media communications on the cultural integration of Georgian emigration. The field of view of Georgian migrants is structured by social networks. The study found that in the countries receiving Georgian immigrants, on the one hand, there is a tendency towards assimilation, integration, and on the other hand - acculturation. It's also a hybrid identity.

Key words: Cultural Diffusion; Hybrid Ydentity; Acculturation; Cultural Diversity;

Georgian Diaspora Identity and Culture on social Media

Maka Dolidze

Abstract: This study explores the media representation of Georgian diasporic identity and culture within the institutional space of Facebook. The research aims to reveal how cultural heritage, historical memory, and individual emigrant experiences are used to construct and represent diasporic belonging. The empirical foundation consists of over 45 posts published between April and July 2026 on the official Facebook page of the "Diaspora Alliance for Georgia." The study relies on qualitative content analysis and encompasses four main themes: cultural heritage and the Georgian script; diasporic theater and cultural self-expression; personal emigrant narratives; and historical memory and transnational belonging.

The findings indicate that the Facebook page functions as a digital diasporic space where identity is represented through cultural symbols, art, historical memory, and personal stories. Audience interaction is dominated by emotional, supportive, and patriotic reactions, while critical discussion remains relatively limited. Furthermore, the representation of cultural initiatives is linked to both the strengthening of transnational belonging and the construction of institutional authority and symbolic capital. The results of the study cannot be generalized to the entire Georgian diaspora, as the research is based on material from a single institutional Facebook page.

Keywords: Georgian diaspora; diasporic identity; social media; Facebook; cultural memory; transnational belonging.

"Standards for State Action to Combat Disinformation in the Digital Space and Protect Freedom of Expression"

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Abstract: As technology advances and the role of the internet expands, the spread of disinformation has become a major challenge for states due to its potential to adversely influence public opinion and undermine democratic development. However, state efforts to combat disinformation may lead to unjustified restrictions on freedom of speech and expression. Measures to counter false information must not unjustifiably restrict freedom of expression. This freedom allows people to discuss matters of public interest and is essential to the democratic development of both society and the state. At the same time, the rapid spread of information online and the widespread accessibility of social media platforms require states to adopt appropriate legal mechanisms to protect the information environment.

This paper examines the legal mechanisms established to combat disinformation in the digital space and their compliance with European Union standards. It analyses states' positive and negative obligations, assesses legislative changes, and draws conclusions aimed at ensuring a balance between safeguarding the information environment and protecting freedom of expression.

Keywords: disinformation, digital space, social media platforms, freedom of expression, legal mechanisms.

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