

Security and Cooperation in the South Caucasus

7-12 September 2026, Baku, Azerbaijan

organized by

Center for Analysis of International Relations and
Multiculturalism

Center for Governance and Culture in Europe

Annual Conference

The South Caucasus is undergoing a profound structural transformation. Following the Second Karabakh War, the region entered a new phase in which connectivity, infrastructure projects, and economic integration have become central elements of an emerging regional order. At the same time, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are increasingly strengthening their own political agency and engaging more directly with one another, gradually reducing the role of external actors in processes of normalization and post-conflict settlement. In this context, the TRIPP (Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity) project, announced after the August 2025 White House summit and envisioned as part of the broader Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), or Middle Corridor, could become an important step toward greater regional interdependence and integration in the South Caucasus. The integration of Armenia into the infrastructure of the Middle Corridor could connect the country not only to the regional space of the South Caucasus, but also to wider Eurasian and global trade networks.

At the same time, this transformation is accompanied by significant risks and challenges. Persistent mistrust among the regional states, competition among external powers for influence in the South Caucasus, and the risk that infrastructure initiatives may be used as instruments of geopolitical pressure remain major obstacles to sustainable regional cooperation. In this context, the influence and policies of Russia and Iran are particularly important, as both view changes in the regional balance and the diversification of transport routes as challenges to their strategic interests. Against this backdrop, an important question is what role the European Union can play in promoting connectivity, resilience, and regional cooperation as the basis for a more stable and interdependent South Caucasus.



University of St.Gallen

Center for Governance
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CENTER FOR ANALYSIS
OF INTERNATIONAL
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MULTICULTURALISM

Program

7 September

Arrival and Check-In

19.00

Welcome Dinner

Shirvanshah Museum Restaurant, 86 Salatin Əsgərova, Baku 1009

8 September

Conference

09.00 - 09.30

Registration

Hyatt Regency Hotel Baku (Meeting and Conference Center / Shusha meeting room)

09.30 - 09.45

Opening Remarks

Farid Shafiyev, Chairman of the Center for Analysis of International Relations and Multiculturalism (AIRCenter)

Ulrich Schmid, Member of Academic Board of the Center for Governance and Culture in Europe (GCE-HSG)

09.45 - 10.00

Guy Bonvin, Deputy head of Regional Cooperation (Embassy of Switzerland to the Republic of Azerbaijan and to Turkmenistan)
The Swiss Cooperation Programme 2026–2029 for the South Caucasus

10.00 - 11.30

Panel 1: The South Caucasus After the Second Karabakh War: A New Regional Order?

Jordi Xucla: *Azerbaijan's Renewed Geopolitical Role in the South Caucasus and the European Union's Strategic Turn*

Michaël Levystone: *Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy since the End of Second Karabakh War in 2020*

Orkhan Gafarov: *From Periphery to Regional Ownership*

Anar Valiyev: *Balancing at the Edge: Azerbaijan and the Politics of Non-Alignment Among Competing Regionalisms in the South Caucasus*

Moderated by Alexander Meienberger

11.30 - 12.00

Coffee Break

Program

12.00 - 13.30	Panel 2: The Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Process and Economic Normalization Sophie Harper and Julius Schulte: <i>Whose Sources Feed the Machines? Azerbaijan Through the Eyes of AI Search Engines</i> Ansgar Jödicke: <i>Do Cultural, Academic or Civil Society Encounters Lead to Peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia?</i> Damjan Krnjevic: <i>Geopolitical Implications of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Process and Economic Normalization</i> Moderated by Vasif Huseynov
13.30 - 15.00	Lunch
15.00 - 16.30	Panel 3: The Middle Corridor and South Caucasus Connectivity Architecture Andrew D'Anieri: <i>TRIPP+TITR and US involvement in advancing connectivity architecture</i> Silvia Stöber: <i>Prospects for an Integrated South Caucasus Connectivity System Linking Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey</i> Jeffrey Mankoff: <i>The Middle Corridor: Prospects, Obstacles, and the Way Ahead</i> Vusal Guliyev: <i>Southern Branch of Middle Corridor Gains Eurasian Connectivity Momentum</i> Moderated by Ulrich Schmid
19.00	Dinner LaQuzu restaurant (Boyuk Qala, Küçəsi 41, Bakı)

Program

9 September	Conference
10.00 - 11:30	Panel 4: Energy Corridors, Economic Integration, and the Geopolitics of Connectivity Felix Hans Breitenreicher: <i>Germany's Role in the South Caucasus within the EU's Global Gateway</i> Theresa Fallon: <i>Geopolitics of Energy Connectivity through Azerbaijan</i> Guy Bonvin: <i>Economic/Logistical Aspects of Connectivity and Water Issues in Relation to Connectivity</i> Moderated by Deena Saleh Shahin
12.00 - 13.30	Lunch
9 - 11 September	Field Research in Azerbaijan: Post-Conflict Environments
14.00 - 20.00	Bus Travel to Karabakh
10 September	Visit to Shusha, Lachin, the Khudafarin Bridge, and the Fuzuli area
11 Septmber	Visit to Aghdam and to Khydyrli Village
17.00 - 22.00	Bus Travel to Baku
12 September	
12.00	Check-Out and Departure
	City Tour of Baku and Informal Networking Among Participants

Participants

- Guy Bonvin — Deputy Head of Regional Cooperation, Embassy of Switzerland to the Republic of Azerbaijan and to Turkmenistan.
- Felix Hans Breitenreicher — Research Associate at the GCE-HSG and the Department of Eastern European Studies, focusing on post-Soviet geopolitics and Eurasian spatiality within German foreign policy.
- Andrew D'Anieri — Associate Director of the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center, where he facilitates the Center's work on Ukraine and Russia and leads its Central Asia programming.
- Theresa Fallon — Founder and Director of the Centre for Russia Europe Asia Studies (CREAS), specializing in Europe–Asia relations, Eurasian connectivity, EU–China relations, and geopolitical developments across the Indo-Pacific and Eurasia.
- Orkhan Gafarov — Research Associate at the GCE-HSG and the Department of Eastern European Studies, focusing on political subjectivity, civil society, and post-Soviet governance.
- Vusal Guliyev — Leading Advisor and Indo-Pacific & Eurasian Affairs Analyst at the Center of Analysis of International Relations, specializing in the South Caucasus, Central Asia, China, and broader Eurasian and East Asian affairs.
- Sophie Harper — Research Associate at the GCE-HSG and the Department of Eastern European Studies, focusing on governance and political studies.
- Vasif Huseynov — Head of Department at the Center for Analysis of International Relations, specializing in EU–Azerbaijan relations and international security in the South Caucasus.
- Ansgar Jödicke — Senior Researcher, Social Sciences Department, University of Fribourg, Switzerland.
- Damjan Krnjević — Professor of Practice at ADA University, specializing in international relations, geopolitics, strategic studies, and foreign policy.
- Michaël Levystone — Co-founder of the Observatory of New Eurasia (ONE), an expert on Central Asia and Russia's foreign policy oriented toward Asia.
- Jeffrey Mankoff — Senior Associate with the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), specializing in Russian foreign policy, Eurasian security, great-power competition, and geopolitical developments across the post-Soviet space.
- Alexander Meienberger — Executive Director of the GCE-HSG.
- Deena Saleh Şahin — Assistant Professor of Economics and Finance at Bahçeşehir University, specializing in political economy, social capital, migration, and institutional development, with a particular focus on the Middle East and North Africa region.

- Ulrich Schmid — Member of Academic Board of GCE-HSG. Professor of East European Studies at the University of St. Gallen, specializing in political culture and media in Eastern Europe.
- Julius Schulte — Researcher at the University of St. Gallen working on machine learning and AI system evaluation. Founder of Aurora Intelligence.
- Farid Shafiyev — Ambassador and Chairman of the Center of Analysis of International Relations, specializing in international relations, foreign policy, and the South Caucasus.
- Silvia Stöber — Foreign Correspondent for ARD/Tagesschau, specializing in Russia, the South Caucasus, and European neighbourhood politics.
- Anar Valiyev — Associate Professor of Public Administration at ADA University, specializing in post-Soviet public policy, governance, democracy, and urban development.
- Jordi Xuclà — Spanish lawyer, academic, and politician from Catalonia. Former member of the Congress of Deputies of Spain and the Senate of Spain.

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