

CAUCASUS UNDER REVIEW - RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS

reviewed by Polad Muradli



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Contested Territories and International Law: A Comparative Study of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and the Aland Islands

By Kamal Makili-Aliyev

Contested Territories and International Law explores the possibility of the resolution of the Azerbaijan–Armenia conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh through the implementation of good practices and experiences based on the Aland Islands precedent within the context of comparative international law. What are the similarities between the conflict situation in the Aland Islands, which was resolved at the beginning of the 20th century, and the protracted armed conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which has dominated the security agenda of the South Caucasus since the dissolution of the Soviet Union? How do differences in factors such as geographical location, territorial structures, historical contexts, and the political processes surrounding these two cases affect the way in which they have been treated? How did the principle of the right to self-determination evolve through the 20th century, and what suggestions does the Aland Islands case provide on matters of demilitarization, neutralization, and the rights of the minority? The book draws parallels between these two cases, ultimately endorsing the application of certain elements of the Aland Islands precedent to pave the way for a final solution of the Azerbaijan–Armenia conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Dr. Kamal Makili-Aliyev is an Associate Professor at Malmö University and a researcher at the Faculty of Law, Lund University, and at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Sweden. Having previously worked as a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies and as the Senior Legal Officer in the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan, and having specialized in the fields of international law, security, defense and conflict, Dr. Makili-Aliyev has consistently been studying the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia from the perspective of international law for almost a decade. He has also

served as a Vice-Rector of Lomonosov Moscow State University Baku Branch and as a Senior Legal Advisor at the Constitutional Court of Azerbaijan, and is a Fellow of the National Security Institute in Amherst, MA, USA.

The volume begins by mentioning that, in many recent cases of territorial conflicts, normative considerations and international law were cast aside in favour of political considerations. However, the author states that it is the normative basis, not political considerations, that allows for the peaceful and civil resolution of any conflict. Thus, in his book the author attempts to provide an answer to the question of how to return the narrative of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict into the sphere of international law, as well as to present guidelines for governments concerned with how to approach the conflict from that viewpoint. The book continues by underlining that a similar situation to the one established around the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia arose in the early 20th century between Sweden and Finland over the sovereignty of the Aland Islands. It is argued that the Aland Islands case, resolved in 1921, represents an exemplary model for the solution of territorial conflicts while providing an effective framework to uphold the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination, as well as to respect the rights of minorities. The author, therefore, attempts to compare the cases of the Aland Islands and Nagorno-Karabakh from the perspective of international law, aiming to come up with an applicable solution to the latter conflict through best practices that can be acquired from the success of the earlier precedent.

Structured in four parts, the first two chapters of the book separately examine the aforementioned cases from the historical and legal standpoints. Referring to the history of both conflicts, the author emphasizes the actuality of both cases in the early 20th century. However, while the question regarding the Aland Islands found a longstanding resolution following the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, “the Nagorno-Karabakh situation was put into some sort of ‘stasis’ incorporated into the Soviet Union.” Opining on the case in the European Court of Human Rights, along with numerous international legal documents, the author concludes the first chapter by claiming that Armenia has indeed adopted the role of an occupying power rather than

that of a concerned kin-state within the context of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. Thus, the right of the people to self-determination, which is the major argument that Armenia exploits to justify its behaviour, is inapplicable to the conflict in a broader sense and cannot give rise to a subsequent right to secession. That being said, the author warns against disregarding the interests of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. Characterized as a minority within the territory of Azerbaijan, the Armenian community of Nagorno-Karabakh, according to the author, “has the right to internal self-determination, basically allowing for autonomous cultural, linguistic and economic development, without jeopardizing the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.” Subsequently, the second chapter presents the case of the Aland Islands as a successful example of the application of the abovementioned idea.

The third chapter presents a comparison of the two cases, and discusses the contrasting attitudes towards issues such as minority rights and protection, self-determination, and the role of third parties in the resolution processes of these conflicts. The final part of the book, in turn, advocates for the application of the Aland Islands precedent in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh, respectively responding to the three main questions derived from the former precedent, i.e., questions concerning: 1) autonomy and self-governance; 2) demilitarization and neutralization; and 3) minority rights in the autonomy. Accordingly, the author provides a specific set of recommendations in the form of principles to be applied for the peaceful resolution of the Azerbaijan–Armenia conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh under international law. All in all, this book can be considered a significant contribution to the field of conflict and international law.

Europe in the Caucasus, Caucasus in Europe: Perspectives on the Construction of a Region

Edited by Andrey Makarychev & Thomas Kruessman

From a purely academic perspective, one may point out the absence of an institutional basis for the South Caucasus as a region, since there is no regional organization that has managed to gather together all three Caucasian countries. Meanwhile, the Caucasus has always been a space mainly constructed by regional powers through different imaginary frameworks. From the EU perspective, “the South Caucasus is the part of post-Soviet area looking for independence from Moscow’s spheres of influence,” while from the Russian perspective, the region appears to be “a colonized periphery always tending to revolt against the core and thus displaying permanent security challenges.” However, even the notion of a unified “space” fails to characterize the region, as all three members of the Caucasian trio define their foreign policy priorities as directly linked to three different regional poles, namely: Georgia to the EU; Armenia to Russia; and Azerbaijan to Turkey. This perspective, in turn, positions the members of the trio as the peripheries of different centers, which makes them highly dependent on and vulnerable to the dynamics of change in the relations between the key power holders. The book *Europe in the Caucasus, Caucasus in Europe*, in fact, moves away from the traditional viewpoint of European studies, which considers the countries of the region as objects of Europeanization, and embraces precisely this idea of examining the South Caucasus through links to the major regional powers.

This volume is edited by Andrey Makarychev, guest professor at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Science at the University of Tartu, and Thomas Kruessman, Senior Research Associate with the Global Europe Centre of the University of Kent and coordinator of the Erasmus+ CBHR project “Modernisation of master programmes for future judges, prosecutors, investigators with respect to European standard on human rights” with the University of Graz. The book is one result of the project “Developing European Studies in the Caucasus” carried out by the Jean Monnet Network. This network, a consortium of EU-based universities and their partners from Turkey, Russia, and

the South Caucasian countries, has the principal aim of fostering novel approaches toward promoting European Studies in the Caucasus in both the academic and the educational realms.

The title *Europe in the Caucasus, Caucasus in Europe* reflects the purpose of the volume to emphasize reciprocity and inter-subjectivity with regard to the movement of ideas in areas such as rivalries between different integration systems on the southern and eastern fringes of Europe, various dimensions of interaction between the countries of the South Caucasus and the European Union in a situation of ongoing conflict with Russia, and different ways of using European experiences for the sake of domestic reforms in the South Caucasus. The contributions to this volume, in turn, are instrumental in discovering various layers and tiers of local politics, and deploying them in a broader international perspective. The topics range from identities to foreign policies, and from memory politics to religion.

The volume can be divided into three parts. The first mainly deals with an analysis of Georgia, its break-away territories, and the role of major international actors, namely the EU and Russia, in shaping Georgian foreign policy. In this respect, Camilla Callesen's article focuses on the social-psychological dimension of intractable conflicts and the role that relations between external actors' belief systems may play in this context, ultimately recommending the strategic incorporation of the abovementioned dimension into the conflict resolution process. Susane Szkola, in turn, examines emotion as a key element of national identity discourses by studying the region's engagement with the EU and Russia from the viewpoint of "emotional turn" in international relations. She demonstrates how emotive discourses play an explicitly political role by filling certain cognitive gaps in collective identities with vernacular narratives, including populist, mythologized, and conspiratorial storylines.

Adam Lenton, in his article, applies the interpretative approach to explain how important discourses are for constructing local perceptions about independence, autonomy, and statehood in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. David Matsaberidze's paper attempts to deconstruct the public political meta-narratives in order to explore the controversial representation of Russia in Georgian society. Shota Kakabadze, in his article, touching upon

memory politics in Georgia, analyzes the widespread references in Georgian society to Stalin as an Orthodox believer, ultimately providing an insight into the intricacies of the illiberal mindset in the country. Dali Osipashvili, in his turn, compares Georgian and Lithuanian media within the context of information wars, and shows how divergent the political trajectories of these countries that were once part of the Soviet Union are, hereinafter denouncing the use of the label “post-Soviet”.

The second part of the book focuses more on the role of institutions and policy practices within the wider Caucasus region. Victoria Hudson, in her contribution, uses the concept of soft power to describe the nature of connections between the Georgian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches of the Moscow Patriarchy with the Russian Orthodox Church. Vasif Huseynov also uses the idea of soft power for his analysis of Russian and Western approaches to the South Caucasus region, eventually demonstrating the deep gaps between these actors’ understanding of soft power as a concept. Giorgi Gigitashvili, in turn, discusses the practicalities of EU policies, with particular attention paid to the efficiency of EU development assistance programs, by sharing his experience of measuring the results of EU-sponsored projects. By basing their research on anthropological and ethnographic data for Svaneti and its inhabitants, Sara Alexander and Michael Long attempt to explain how the concept of identity might be used for practical policies for tourism development. Olga Dorokhina, in her article, refers to various societal initiatives as means for reconciliation and peacemaking across the post-conflict borderlines, emphasizing the importance of cross- and trans-border connectivity in the Georgian context of European experiences.

The last section of the book presents a number of research notes on topics such as the economic, financial, and political role of China in the South Caucasus, the opportunities and limitations of the EU’s depoliticized strategy towards Eastern Partnership countries, and the prospects for implementing new web-based technologies in the region. All in all, the articles and research notes collected in this volume are intended to fill certain existing gaps in academic scholarship on the South Caucasus and to offer new insights into regional studies, both from within and from outside.

South Caucasus in Motion

World Bank Report

The new World Bank Report *South Caucasus in Motion* provides a comprehensive assessment of poverty and inequality in the South Caucasus through the lens of mobility. It is based on an analysis of various sources of information, including household budget and perceptions surveys, administrative records on public services, international standardized test results, and even night-time light emission data, which, taken together, comprise a convincing body of evidence on the constraints on social, economic and spatial mobility in the region. The report emphasizes the notable improvements made by all three countries of the region that have allowed poverty to be significantly reduced during the last two decades, and introduces the new challenges that these countries face in their efforts to meet the aspirations of the emerging middle class.

Sustainable economic growth, poverty reduction, and shared prosperity require that the full potential of all geographical and administrative areas, population groups, and economic sectors be realized. Meanwhile, the report argues that Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia have not yet integrated important geographical areas and population segments in full economic participation and social development. Economic gains have not been uniformly and equitably translated into greater welfare and opportunity among all households and individuals. By adopting various lenses on mobility, this book seeks to understand and consider mobility in the South Caucasus as a means to support all individuals in becoming integrated into and fully benefiting from economic development. According to the report, mobility is closely linked to the notion of equality of opportunity, as it helps individuals to reach their fullest potential, regardless of social, cultural, economic, or geographical characteristics.

In this respect, the first chapter of the report focuses on spatial inequalities. It describes an array of channels along which spatial disparities influence mobility, and it assesses variations in poverty, inequality, consumption, economic activity, and employment across geographical and administrative areas. Through in-depth descriptive analyses of various sources of existing data, it

presents evidence on spatial dynamics as a possible constraint to mobility in the South Caucasus. The chapter concludes that large spatial variations in poverty, inequality, and development across the regions and provinces of the South Caucasus negatively affect mobility and shared prosperity. The findings demonstrate a clear division between capital cities, secondary urban centers, and rural or hinterland areas, and emphasize that economic development has been mainly led by capital cities, while economic activity and market potential lag in other urban and rural areas. While poverty tends to persist in both urban and rural settings, the numerous geographical and demographic challenges of the latter lead to spatial disparities and poor connectivity, which reduces the opportunities for agglomeration and contributes to the isolation of large segments of the population. Hence, the three countries underutilize important resources for economic development and maintain unfair access to economic and social opportunities across spatial divides. The report suggests that reducing the negative effects of the spatial disparities over the three dimensions of economic geography – density, distance, and division – will be key to improving shared prosperity in the South Caucasus.

Chapter 2 focuses on the dynamics of social and economic mobility in the region. By economic mobility, the chapter refers to changes in the incomes of individuals and assesses the movements of households in and out of poverty. The chapter identifies and explores the characteristics of households based on poverty and welfare status, including chronically poor households, vulnerable households, and middle-class households. It draws lessons from the characteristics of households that have managed to escape and remain out of poverty and the contrast between these households and those that are chronically poor. The chapter also analyzes social or intergenerational mobility in the South Caucasus by focusing on educational attainment across generations. The results indicate that progress in educational attainment from one generation to the next has not been guaranteed in the South Caucasus. Similar to the case for economic mobility, social mobility in the countries of the South Caucasus shows both upward and downward shifts, indicating constraints on the mobility needed by households to overcome poverty so that the next generations inherit greater welfare.

Chapter 3, in turn, analyzes inequalities of opportunity in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia through an emphasis on access to labor markets. The analysis adapts the human opportunity index (HOI) framework of Barros et al. (2009, 2010) to identify the influence of fair and unfair factors in access to good jobs. Ultimately, the chapter provides evidence that, in fact, unfair factors, such as gender, ethnicity, and parental political affiliation, account for large shares of the inequality of opportunities across the countries, while fair components of inequality, such as education and work experience, are less significant. The chapter also describes more in-depth research on the issue of human capital by exploring inequalities in access to education and basic public services among children aged 16 or younger. The findings show that, despite the high coverage rates of schooling and basic public services in the South Caucasus, learning performance tends to be poor, unequal, and dependent on the socioeconomic circumstances and geographical location of the children. Consequently, inequality of opportunity seems to be a binding constraint on mobility in the South Caucasus. According to the report, the unfair distribution of good jobs and of the basic inputs of human capital accumulation unfairly prevents individuals from taking advantage of opportunities in labour markets.

The final chapter adapts the policy framework from the World Development Report 2009 to identify relevant policy instruments to address the barriers to mobility in each country, including: (a) horizontal policies that promote mobility across the economy and society; (b) hard and soft infrastructure that connects people, geographical and administrative areas, and markets; and (c) interventions that target and provide incentives to specific areas and sectors of the population. The chapter then maps the lessons from the detailed mobility analysis in chapters 1–3 and other research results into relevant, practical policy recommendations to foster mobility in each country of the South Caucasus. The recommendations cover crucial ideas, such as understanding and removing the constraints to the development of lagging districts; leveraging opportunities for agglomeration; linking geographical areas, peoples, and markets; fostering equality in access to better jobs; and making sure that high-quality education and basic services are available to all individuals and areas.

The countries of the South Caucasus have indeed overcome major economic and social obstacles over recent decades. The GDP of Azerbaijan, for instance, grew at an annual rate of 11 percent between 2010 and 2015. This impressive growth was accompanied by poverty reduction through higher social transfers and a dramatic rise in real wages. Large segments of the population moved up the development ladder, often by overcoming poverty and becoming part of an expanding middle class. Ultimately, this report attempts to provide insights about the barriers to the full realization of this phenomenon in the South Caucasus and to suggest ways in which these barriers may be reduced or eliminated.