

CAUCASUS UNDER REVIEW* - RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS

While the Caucasus is a region of enormous diversity and potential, it is also a region about which relatively little is known. However, during the last decade, a numerous publications on the region have expanded both regional and international understanding of this diversity and potential. This overview of recent publications provides an up-to-date reading list for anyone interested in the region.



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In this issue, we feature five books, each with a different focus, from geopolitics to conflict resolution. The first book, *The Caspian Chessboard: Geopolitical, Geostrategic and Geoeconomic Analysis*, addresses geopolitical and geo-economic processes in the Caspian region, including the policies pursued by the littoral states together with the strategies of external actors towards the region. This publication is a joint project initiative of the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of Azerbaijan (SAM) and the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI). The book is published by Egea publishing house in Milan, Italy.

The second book, *Georgia: A Political History since Independence* covers Georgia's political history from the late 1980s to the present day. Professor Stephen F. Jones of Mount Holyoke College investigates the dramatic changes the country has undergone through since the end of Soviet rule. The author's rigorous analysis of political and societal issues reveals the key changes experienced within the frames of state and society in Georgia. This book provides essential insights into contemporary Georgia. It is not only well-written but also is a meaningful contribution to the existing body of literature.

The next book in our list is *Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus: Challenges to International Efforts*, by Esmira Jafarova. As the author is both from the region as well as a visiting scholar at Columbia University's Harriman Institute, she has a deep understanding of how the complex local dynamics interact with shifting international political agendas. She skillfully analyzes the benefits and limitations of international resolution mechanisms, examining how external powers have engaged with the conflicts of the South Caucasus. This book provides helpful guidance for both scholars and policymakers, exposing the flawed assumptions that often underpin the international community's engagement with the region.

The fourth book is *Legal aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Hukuki Yönleriyle Dağlık Karabağ Sorunu* in its original Turkish). The author, Associate Professor Javid Abdullazada of Ankara University, illuminates aspects of this frozen conflict from the perspective of international law, focusing on the importance of international legal principles in connection with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The book concentrates on four

aspects of the conflict, starting with the historical background of the war. The second section deals with relevant national law, while the third section focuses on the bearing of international law. The final section analyses the legal aspect of Armenia's role in the conflict.

The last book is *US Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Politics, Energy and Security*, by Professor Christoph Bluth of the University of Bradford. The author examines the U.S. policy from Clinton to Obama, drawing on interviews with leading figures in the U.S. administration. This study not only presents the first systematic analysis of the US policy towards the Caspian states, but also embraces a holistic theoretical approach of the U.S. national and international security understanding.

The Caspian Chessboard: Geopolitical, Geostrategic and Geoeconomic Analysis

Edited by Carlo Frappi and Azad Garibov

Egea, 2014, 244 pp.

The book was co-edited and co-authored by Azad Garibov, a Research Fellow at the Foreign Policy department of SAM and Carlo Frappi, an Associate Fellow at the Caucasus and Central Asia Programme of the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI). Several well-known experts from the Caspian littoral countries also contributed to the volume. The foreword to the book was co-written by SAM Director Farhad Mammadov and ISPI Director and Executive Vice-President Paolo Magri. “*The Caspian Sea Chessboard*” is one of the most comprehensive pieces of research on the Caspian basin to date. It examines the relevance of the region within the modern system of international relations, as well as describing how the region functions as an autonomous sub-system, and how its complex realities connect with the outside world. The first part of the volume examines the transnational issues that shape the littoral states’ regional policies, which demand cooperation among all the riparian countries. The book addresses the legal status of the Caspian Sea, the regional arms race and the militarization of the sea, energy infrastructure security, international cooperation in the maritime environment, and so on. The second chapter covers the regional policies of the Caspian littoral states, exploring the interests and strategies of Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran in the Caspian Sea in connection with their economic and political strategies in the region. Finally, the last chapter provides an overview of the policies of the great powers in the Caspian region. Here, the authors examine the relations between the five littoral states and the United States, European Union, Turkey and China.

Georgia: A Political History since Independence

By Stephen Jones

I.B. Tauris, 2014, 400 pp.

Georgia emerged from the fall of the Soviet empire in 1991 with the promise of swift economic and democratic reform. But that promise remains unfulfilled. Economic collapse, secessionist challenges, civil war and the failure to escape the legacy of Soviet rule - culminating in the 2008 war with Russia - characterize a two-decade struggle to establish democratic institutions and consolidate statehood. Here, Stephen Jones critically analyses Georgia's recent political and economic development, illustrating what its 'transition' has meant, not just for the state, but for its citizens as well. An authoritative and commanding exploration of Georgia since independence, this is essential for those interested in the post-Soviet world.



Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus: Challenges to International Efforts

By Esmira Jafarova

Lexington Books, 2014, 186 pp.

This book explores the efforts by the international community to facilitate solutions to the conflicts in the South Caucasus, focusing in particular on the existing challenges to these efforts. The South Caucasus region has long been riven by lingering ethno-national conflicts—the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts within Georgia—which continue to disrupt security and stability in the entire region. Throughout different phases of the conflicts the international community has shown varying degrees of involvement in conflict resolution. For the purpose of clarity, it should be emphasized that references to the “international community” will be confined to the organizations that have an active role in the process (the UN, the OSCE, and the EU), and the states with the biggest impact on the conflict resolution processes and leverage in relation to the conflict parties—Russia, Turkey, and the United States.

Legal aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

By Javid Abdullazada

Adalet Yayınevi, 2013, 365 pp.

Prior to the collapse of the USSR, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue had come under the aegis of the Soviets. However, following independence, it became one of Azerbaijan's internal issues, and fairly quickly evolved into a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Such a complicated issue requires an in-depth analysis from the perspective of international law. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has claimed thousands of lives. More than one million Azerbaijanis are refugees as a result of the conflict. Although the parties reached a cease-fire agreement in 1994, the issue remains unresolved. A detailed analysis of the complicated judicial issues related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is both necessary and important.



US Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Politics, Energy and Security

By Christoph Bluth

I.B. Tauris, 2014, 288 pp.

Central Asia and the Caucasus are of immense geopolitical importance for the US and Russia, but neither power has successfully established regional domination. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the states of the Caspian region began to develop their oil and gas reserves, and as a result, their importance on the international stage has increased rapidly. Considering the impact of events such as the 9/11 terror attacks and the wars in Afghanistan and Iran, alongside issues including national security, energy policies and American ambitions to limit Russian influence, Christopher Bluth explains why the US has failed to establish authority in this globally significant region. Examining US policy from Clinton to Obama and drawing on interviews with leading figures in the US administration, this study presents the first systematic analysis of US policy towards the Caspian states.