

Editor's Note

The current issue of the Caucasus Strategic Perspectives (CSP) journal entitled “*Building Bridges over Caspian: South Caucasus-Central Asia Cooperation*” is dedicated to the new paradigms for peacebuilding and geopolitical gaps, as well as possible confrontation and cooperation matrices in the South Caucasus region with focus on security, economic, humanitarian, political and geopolitical aspects.

The CSP's new issue includes 7 articles and 1 book review. The CSP's current authors analysed the EU's increasing mediation role towards the South Caucasus region, the importance of the Middle Corridor for trans-regional connectivity, the recent processes in the South Caucasus region in the light of ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, Türkiye's engagement, as well as the US strategic interests in this region, the possibility of the potential threats for South Caucasus, etc.

The new issue's *Highlight Section* commences with **Simona Scotti's** article of “*The Increasing Relevance of the Middle Corridor in Sino-European Trade: Which role for Azerbaijan?*” which discusses in detail the potential of the Middle Corridor to establish itself as a viable route for intercontinental trade and the role that Azerbaijan could play to develop this route and to enhance the prosperity of the region. It examines the impacts and benefits of the corridor, as well as its physical and non-physical barriers.

The new issue's *Articles Section* starts with **Alper Coşkun's** article of “*Türkiye's Eastern Engagement: Framing and Focusing This Ambition Wisely Matters*” analysed Türkiye's goal of deepening its eastern engagement to be on the mark. It argues that this ambition needs to be framed in accordance with Türkiye's western vocation and calls for Türkiye to focus on deepening and widening its cooperation in the South Caucasus and Central Asia in view of the new opportunities that are presenting themselves.

James Carafano's article of “*Future and Consequences of US Strategic Interest in the South Caucasus*” explains that stability, prosperity, and regional integration in the South Caucasus are now becoming increasingly important to the US, given the current military crisis in another part of the European neighbourhood. He believes, official Washington is expected to look more favourably on accelerating regional integration along the “middle corridor” – the sea and land

route from Southern Europe via the Black Sea to Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea, and the Central Asian states.

Natalia Konarzewska's article of "*Unpacking Türkiye-Russia dynamics in the Ukraine war and post-war situation in the South Caucasus*" argues that Russia's war in Ukraine creates not only risks for Türkiye, but also a wide range of opportunities to boost its economy and regional posture. In particular, Moscow's weakening military power gives Türkiye a chance to enhance its role in the post-war security architecture in the South Caucasus region.

Agil Rustamzade's article of "*The Possibility of a New Military Confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan: Assessment of Risks and Threats in the Short Term*" focused primarily on identifying the maximum limit of the capabilities of the Government of Armenia to restore and strengthen the defence potential of its armed forces in the short term. To that end, his article identifies the entire range of threats and risks that might stem from Armenia.

Gvantsa Davitashvili's article of "*Peace-building in the South Caucasus through the Eastern Partnership: What is the new role for the EU?*" argues that the EU's external governance toolbox has had a limited overall impact on conflict resolution in the South Caucasus countries and concludes that the EU has revised its European integration framework towards Georgia, taking into consideration the increasing security challenges in the region, and has initiated a 'European membership perspective'. With regard to the normalization of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the EU's expanded role as a mediator of this process is considered to be a contribution of the EU to peace-building.

Nurlan Mustafayev's article of "*The Judicialization of the Armenia–Azerbaijan Conflict: Will International Courts Contribute to a Lasting Peace in the South Caucasus?*" analyses the ongoing inter-state legal cases between Armenia and Azerbaijan and their legal and political consequences for the parties and the South Caucasus region at large. The article argues that these international legal forums can partially answer some of the transitional justice issues, but not all matters arising from this three-decades-long conflict, which ended in 2020.

The new issue's **Book Review Series** includes comprehensive review of the book titled "Constructive Competition in the Caspian Sea Region" (authored by Agha Bayramov) by Naghi Ahmadov. This book aims to shed light on the growing role of state and non-state actors in

the Caspian Sea region. The author presents a novel and unorthodox interpretation of the Caspian Sea region. The author picks out three case studies, namely the Caspian Environmental Program (CEP), the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC), and the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) to explore the peculiarities of relationships among littoral states in light of functionalism via social constructivism.

Finally, on behalf of the CSP team, we hope this issue provides food for thought and contributes to and enriches the discussion on subject-matter issue.

Sincerely
Farid Shafiyev
Editor-in-Chief of CSP Journal