

Ambitious Agenda – Limited Substance? Critical Examinations of the EU's Resilience Turn in the South Caucasus

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AMBITIOUS AGENDA—LIMITED SUBSTANCE? CRITICAL EXAMINATIONS OF THE EU'S RESILIENCE TURN IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

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(Institute of Slavic Languages and Caucasus Studies, University of Jena)*

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Introduction by the Special Editors, Diana Forker and Bidzina Lebanidze
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Resilience has recently emerged as a new buzzword associated with the EU’s multilevel and external governance. Policy and academic attention has shifted from the EU as a ‘normative power’ or a ‘civilian power’ to the EU as a resilience-building power in non-EU countries. However, five years after its official inception the concept and its practical applicability remain widely contested and confusing. This special issue seeks to explore whether and to what extent the ‘resilience turn’ in the EU’s foreign policy-making has shaped EU external governance in the South Caucasus region. The three countries of the South Caucasus—Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia—are characterised by fractured societal and state resilience and are affected by various domestic and international risks, conflicts and crises which further threaten the region’s security, cohesion and sustainable development. The region therefore represents a rich laboratory to explore to what extent the EU has (not) been able to boost resilience in the region by strengthening sources of resilience and alleviating local and global risks.

The special issue is multidisciplinary in nature with contributions covering broad issues from the disciplines of international relations and security studies, political science, linguistics and sociology. Veronika Pfeilschifter explores EU resilience building in the area of post-authoritarian transitional justice in Armenia. Diana Forker and Natia Botkoveli examine the impact of languages on community and individual resilience in minority communities of Georgia. Tiffany G. Williams explores how synergies of the EU–US security governance can strengthen resilient self-defence in Georgia. Finally, Bidzina Lebanidze, Ashot Aleksanyan and Irena Gonashvili examine whether and how a lack of geopolitical actorness undermines EU resilience building in Armenia and Georgia.

Diana Forker and Bidzina Lebanidze
(Institute of Slavic Languages and Caucasus Studies, University of Jena)

Transitional Justice, Societal Resilience, and the European Union's Role in Armenia (2018–2022)

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Abstract

This article explores the European Union's (EU) resilience approach by focusing on post-authoritarian transitional justice (TJ) and examining the situation in Armenia from 2018 to 2022. After elaborating on the relationship between TJ and societal resilience, it draws on four aspects. It examines first the Armenian government's implemented TJ measures and its modest increase of societal resilience; second, the EU's 'half-hearted' TJ role; and third, the EU's resilience agenda in Armenia since 2021, and its decreased discursive devotion to TJ. Finally, it gives recommendations to the Armenian government and the EU on how to revitalise TJ implementation in order to enhance societal resilience in Armenia.

Introduction: Examining the Nexus between Societal Resilience and Transitional Justice

Resilience and transitional justice (TJ) have recently been analysed as a nexus, and researchers have been split on whether the two concepts are complementary or in a tense relationship (Kastner 2020; Lambourne 2021; Wiebelhaus-Brahm 2017). The long-term societal visions of TJ, transformability and societal healing, and resilience, adaptability and maintenance, stand in stark contrast to one another.¹ Still, resilience and TJ share interrelated political elements, such as changeability and persistence. For the purpose of this essay, the European Union (EU) definitions will be applied. Following a liberal-conservative agenda, resilience is seen as 'the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises' (European Union External Service 2016: 23).

Though the EU has not operationalised societal resilience, sources that EU-implemented projects have considered for analysis include legitimacy of governance actors and the design of governance institutions, particularly those charged with rule-making and the provision of public goods (Stollenwerk et al. 2021: 1224–1225). Following the United Nations (2010), the EU has defined TJ as 'the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation' (European Union External Service 2015: 2). The EU's TJ agenda has highlighted a series of key measures, including investigations and prosecutions

of perpetrators, the legal rehabilitation of victims, vetting, special compensation for victims, public remembrance, apologies, and non-judicial investigations (see also Pettai/ Pettai 2015). TJ scholars have differentiated between narrow TJ approaches focusing on violations of civic and political rights (political violence) and broad approaches including violations of social and economic rights, that is, economic violence (for a further discussion, cf. e.g., Hecht/ Michalowski 2012; Muvngi 2009; Sharp 2014).

The socio-economic dimension related to corruption and socio-economic inequality, mostly marginalised in TJ processes, has remained under-reflected (European Union External Service 2015). However, this dimension would be particularly relevant for societies that have suffered from a high level of economic inequality such as Armenia (Pfeilschifter 2021). Wiebelhaus-Brahm (2017: 154–157), on whose conceptual framework this analysis is based, has examined which TJ scenarios can enhance or negatively impact societal resilience. The latter refers to retributive measures, such as selective prosecutions, which can undermine the legitimacy of governance structures. Furthermore, trials and vetting might lead to a removal of valuable technical expertise and governance capacity. Still, TJ has extraordinary potential to enhance societal resilience: through rebuilding connections between authorities and citizens, TJ can enhance social trust and improve the design of governance institutions. In addition, redistributive measures which examine a society's political economy can increase social cohesiveness (Wiebelhaus-Brahm 2017).

¹ For organisational reasons, a broader critical reflection of the concept of resilience cannot be unfolded here. The researcher remains sceptical of the concept and argues that the current mainstream application of resilience towards social science is still embedded in the logic of neoliberal capitalism, which prevents an alternative articulation of new forms of social relations. A replacement concept might be resourcefulness (MacKinnon/ Driscoll Derickson 2012). For further critical investigations, cf. e.g., Graefe 2020, Mahdiani/ Ungar 2021, Shwaikh 2021.

The Pending Promise of Post-Revolutionary TJ and its Impact on Societal Resilience in Armenia

One of the central assurances of Armenia's 2018 'Velvet Revolution' was the implementation of 'transitional justice bodies' (Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia 2018). The government's larger 'Strategy on Judicial and Legal Reform 2019–2023' mentioned TJ as one crucial element of judicial reforms. At the core of the strategy was the creation of a fact-finding commission which was supposed to contribute to non-retributive truth-telling. Aspects deserving special attention were electoral rights violations since 1991, political prosecutions in post-election processes since 1991, property rights violations and 'other forms of expropriation', and servicemen deceased in non-combatant circumstances (Government of the Republic of Armenia 2019a). The commission was supposed to be the basis for restoring rights, ensuring compensations and creating a historic record to reconstruct the characteristics of past human rights violations. Initially, TJ was considered positively among Armenian society, which had a high level of benevolence towards the post-revolutionary government.² In a 2019 nationwide poll, 60% considered TJ implementation important and clearly stated that they demanded the investigation of schemes of corruption, illicit enrichment, and confiscation of property covering the period from 2008 to 2018, the period in which former head of state Serzh Sargsyan was in office (International Republican Institute 2019b: 37, 39). In the following, I argue that while certain TJ measures have improved the design of governance institutions, and it has thus been an important source of societal resilience, the slow pace and partial absence of certain TJ measures have kept governmental legitimacy rather low. Thus, the Armenian government's contribution to strengthening societal resilience through TJ has so far been modest.

In 2020, a Law on the Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Assets (Armenian Legal Information System 2020) came into force, which 'aims to confiscate and nationalise the illicit assets of former officials accused of corruption' (Nazaretyan 2020). Based on that, a special unit within the General Prosecutor's Office was tasked with investigating cases of illegally acquired assets. Furthermore, in 2021, Armenia's National Assembly

approved the establishment of a specific anti-corruption court. This court is a non-retributive infrastructure that seeks to settle conflicts that arise from non-plausible discrepancies between reported and actual income and wealth (Kopalyan 2022). Another positive TJ measure was Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's apology to the victims of 1 March 2008, when eight civilians and two policemen were killed after protests against electoral falsifications. These were acknowledged as victims of political prosecution and murder, and a public commemoration was held in Yerevan in 2019.³ In addition, the relatives of all 10 slain individuals and all those who were injured were materially compensated (Caucasian Knot 2019). While casual relations between the mentioned TJ instruments and societal resilience cannot be measured at this stage of research due to a lack of empirical data,⁴ a recent survey indicates that Pashinyan's legitimacy has remained stable. In 2021, 55% evaluated his work as 'favourable' (International Republican Institute 2021a: 17).

However, two major issues remain that have undermined societal resilience in Armenia: the vetting of judges and prosecutions related to the broader investigatory infrastructure. First, vetting has solely considered upcoming judges' declarations on income, property, and good conduct (including educational background and relations with organised crime) starting 1 July 2017. It excludes acting Constitutional Court justices, prosecutors, and investigators, and thus does not have any retrospective character. Consequently, judges who were, for instance, responsible for covering up the events that led to the violent protests in March 2008 or the 2016 hostage crisis⁵ have not been involved in the integrity check. Empirical data indicates that the legitimacy of the courts has remained low: in 2019, 50% of the Armenian population estimated that the Armenian judicial system was not yet 'independent', with 79% of those stating that it relied on the former authorities (International Republican Institute 2019a: 31, 32). In a 2021 poll, 57% held unfavourable views towards the courts, and 55% had a negative opinion about the Constitutional Court (International Republican Institute 2021a: 14, 22, 23).

Second, the prosecutor's office has remained widely unreformed, which has caused a continuation of significant limitations in investigatory competence. While

2 In a nationwide poll conducted by the International Republican Institute in spring 2019, 81% considered the work of the President's office and 72% the work of the Prime Minister's office as "highly favourable" (International Republican Institute 2019a: 26).

3 "Long Live Freedom"—Pashinyan apologizes to March First victims on behalf of Armenia', Armenpress, 1 March 2019, <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/966028/eng/> (accessed 15 March 2022).

4 In autumn 2019, 67% believed that the government's fight against corruption has progressed, and 66% said that the government was making an effort to fight corruption (International Republican Institute 2019b).

5 On 17 July 2016, a group of armed men calling themselves Sasna Tsrer ('Daredevils of Sassoun') stormed the Erebuni police station in Yerevan and demanded the release of the Founding Parliament leader and Karabakh war hero Jirayr Sefilyan and the resignation of then-president Sargsyan. They took nine people as hostages, killed one policeman and injured at least two; one of them died later in a hospital. The Sasna Tsrer members held the police station for two weeks and released all hostages on 23 July 2016.

reforms of the prosecutor's office are necessary to advance the TJ process, its complete overhaul could also lead to a serious decline in professionalism due to a limited staff (Kopalyan 2022). Though the government has filed criminal cases against former high-ranking officials, among them two former heads of state (Robert Kocharyan, 2000–2008 and Serzh Sargsyan, 2008–2018), related family members, former influential oligarchs, and representatives of law enforcement, prosecutions have been perceived as incomplete or remained in limbo,⁶ creating a sentiment of continued impunity. Thus, trust towards prosecutorial units has remained low: in a 2021 poll, 55% declared an unfavourable view of the prosecutor's office (International Republican Institute 2021a: 14).

The EU's Half-Hearted Intervention in Armenia's Post-2018 Transitional Justice Process and its Limited Impact on Societal Resilience

Very early in the TJ process in autumn 2018, the EU expressed its willingness to share best practices and advice on how to connect the TJ process in Armenia with wider judicial reforms; however, it stopped short of initiating a distinct TJ programme. The EU underlined that it would not impose on the Armenian government how to implement TJ, arguing that the process should be locally owned (Delegation of the European Union to Armenia 2018). This is a significantly different and less committed approach than exercised, for instance, towards Georgia (2004), where the EU sent a rule of law mission to advance judicial reforms. This specific mission's main aim was to address imminent challenges in the criminal justice system and assist the Georgian government in developing a coordinated approach to the reform process.

The assistance that the EU provided to the Armenian government was mostly limited to technicalities of judicial reforms. First, the development of a TJ toolkit, which was already part of the government's larger Strategy on Judicial and Legal Reform 2019–2023, was financially and organisationally supported by the EU (Delegation of the European Union to Armenia 2018). Second, the EU provided monetary assistance for the establishment of the mentioned specialised anti-corruption court, which is part of the government's anti-corruption strategy (Government of the Republic of Arme-

nia 2019b). Furthermore, it has formed partnerships with local NGOs such as the Armenian Lawyers' Association (ALA) and hosted civil society-governmental public debates on TJ implementation which have been attended by government officials. Finally, the EU–Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed in November 2017 and in force since 1 March 2021, has streamlined its support for judicial reforms, more precisely 'independence of the judiciary, access to justice, the right to a fair trial [...], and procedural safeguards in criminal matters and victims' rights [...], the fight against corruption and the administration of justice' (European Commission 2017: Article 12, §1, 2).

While this essay cannot present empirical evidence on the EU's direct contribution to consolidating societal resilience in Armenia, it can be concluded that the EU's assistance was helpful in the development of the TJ infrastructure that has been gradually ameliorating the structural weaknesses of governmental institutions, but that the EU's de facto intervention has remained limited. The analysed documents demonstrate that the EU's understanding of TJ has been narrow, separating legal and economic questions and focusing on technical reforms. While technical assistance is certainly one important feature of how to support the TJ process in Armenia, more support could have been provided with regard to the compensation of victims and other non-retributive measures. Such interventions could contribute to increasing legitimacy and social trust in the government.

The EU's Resilience Agenda in Armenia and its Changed Devotion to Transitional Justice

While the mentioned EU support in the judicial sector is ongoing as of May 2022, the EU's outspokenness and commitment in terms of TJ support in Armenia has significantly decreased over the last two years. Instead, resilience, applied to all policy sectors, has taken the most prominent place in the EU's public discourse. It can be stated that resilience has already become an empty signifier, leaving open how exactly the EU understands resilience. In the Armenian case, the EU has interpreted resilience as an answer to Armenia's post-war national crisis⁷ and its threatened sovereignty. The EU's resilience agenda gained particular momentum in summer

6 'Criminal Cases in Limbo at Armenia's Investigative Bodies', CivilNet, 5 May 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2FWjkMIgaY> (accessed 12 September 2020).

7 The horrendous second Nagorno-Karabakh war, which lasted 44 days, ended with the deaths of around 7,000 people, including more than 4,000 on the Armenian side, and significant territorial gain for Azerbaijan. On the night of 9 November 2020, when a Russian brokered ceasefire came into force and formally ended the war, angry mobs stormed government buildings in Yerevan. Later, parts of Armenia's armed forces intervened in the political arena and called on Prime Minister Pashinyan to resign. The state remained widely paralysed, lacking a new diplomatic strategy.

2021, when the EU announced a 2.6-billion-euro investment package proposed in view of the ongoing political reforms as documented in the initiative ‘Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing resilience—an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all’ and the joint staff working document ‘Recovery, resilience and reform: Post-2020 Eastern Partnership priorities’. This package supports particular flagship projects: direct economic support for up to 30,000 small- and medium-sized enterprises, up to 600 million euro for a new north-south transport corridor, up to 300 million euro for Armenia’s tech sector, up to 80 million euro in economic and infrastructure investment in the southern province Syunik and up to 120 million euro in investments for a ‘green’ Yerevan, including the modernisation of local public transport (Avetisyan 2021).

However, the EU’s resilience agenda in Armenia no longer considers TJ a policy priority. Instead, the resilience approach underlines strengthening the rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms as well as supporting the implementation of key judicial reforms. The EU’s commitment to judicial reforms includes, in particular, the further adjustment of Armenia’s constitutional and legislative frameworks to the EU *acquis*, monitoring of justice reforms, ensuring autonomous prosecutorial services, the digitalisation of the judicial system, and training for law enforcement staff (European Commission 2021: 5). This could be interpreted as the EU no longer considering TJ implementation in Armenia necessary given that Armenia has undergone two democratic elections since its 2018 transition and has thus shown a commitment to representative democracy. This is reflected in the EU’s budget policy. An example of a current project that the EU supports is ‘Consolidation of the Justice System in Armenia’, which is co-implemented by the Armenian Ministry of Justice and European legal organisations and has focused on simplifying administrative procedures and the analysis of integrity among prosecutors (IRZ 2021). Certainly, while the slogan under which the overhaul of historically violent structures can be achieved remains open to debate, it remains crucial, as some experts have underlined, that legal reforms are implemented first in order to prepare a solid fundament for further and more profound TJ implementation. However, Armenia has moved beyond a grand TJ agenda (e.g., Kopalyan 2022).

About the Author

Veronika Pfeilschifter is a doctoral candidate and research associate at the Institute for Caucasus Studies at Friedrich Schiller University Jena in Jena, Germany. Her Ph.D. project analyses new left youth communities in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan by examining aspects of political ideologies, transnational networks, and intergenerational transmission. Pfeilschifter holds MA degrees from the Universities of Tartu and Glasgow as well as Ilia State University in the framework of the IMCEERES (Central, Eastern European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies) programme.

Concluding Remarks: Recommendations to the Armenian Government and the European Union

As shown, the TJ process in Armenia is thus far incomplete. However, it would be incorrect to state that it was without any success. A few individuals received direct compensations, non-judicial measures such as commemorations have been undertaken, and legal frameworks have been developed to move anti-corruption reforms forward. These measures have strengthened sources of societal resilience. As underlined, the biggest remaining weaknesses can be found in the prosecutor’s office, the National Security Service, and the judiciary, which have remained widely unreformed. The rehabilitation of these institutions is crucial to moving the TJ process forward, which can then improve the design of governance institutions and other sources of societal resilience. Though a fact-finding commission was originally intended to become the central element of TJ in Armenia, the Armenian government can further enhance TJ by focusing on the mentioned institutional reforms and anti-corruption courts. Here, the EU can proactively support the Armenian government, for instance by helping redevelop Armenia’s legal education system, cooperating with the Armenian government on designing a professional development program for prosecutors, and helping to change the country’s bureaucratic culture (Kopalyan 2022). This can be carried out further in the framework of the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument of the European Commission.

Furthermore, the EU can discursively support civil society’s TJ efforts by releasing public statements or supporting organisations involved in the TJ process online. Available surveys underline that the EU enjoys a high level of favourability within Armenian society. In 2019, 76% of Armenians perceived the signing of the CEPA as positive (International Republican Institute 2019a: 54). In 2020, 80% considered the EU’s financial support effective, and 47% claimed that Armenia has profited from EU support through improved quality of the justice system (Ecorys 2020: 17, 46). Additionally, at the end of 2021, 69% evaluated the relations between the EU and Armenia as good (International Republican Institute 2021b). Thus, the EU should consolidate its political instruments to advance Armenia’s societal resilience through justice reforms.

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Timeline

Date	Event
17 August 2018	During a rally 100 days after the Velvet Revolution, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announces the establishment of transitional justice bodies in Armenia.
28 November 2018	During a civil society-government forum, then-head of the EU delegation to Armenia Piotr Antoni Świtalski underlines the EU’s commitment to assist the Armenian government in the implementation of judicial reforms as part of its move towards transitional justice.
24 May 2019	A first parliamentary debate on the design and implementation of TJ measures is held in Armenia’s parliament, the National Assembly.
26 May 2019	Then-head of the EU delegation to Armenia Piotr Antoni Świtalski states that the EU is not directly involved in internal discussions on judicial reforms in Armenia.
3 October 2019	The Armenian government adopts its 2019–2022 Anti-Corruption Strategy.
12 October 2019	The Armenian government adopts the 2019–2023 Judicial and Legal Reform Strategy.
28 October 2019	The Partnership for Open Society Initiative representing Armenian non-governmental organisations and the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) co-organise a public discussion on ‘Transitional justice, corruption and state capture: Lessons from Armenia’ in Yerevan.
23 May 2020	The national Law on the Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Assets enters into force.
27 September – 10 November 2020	The second Nagorno-Karabakh war takes place after Azerbaijan launches an offensive against Armenia. The war ends with a ceasefire brokered by the Russian government.
19 January 2021	The Armenian National Assembly approves the creation of an anti-corruption court consisting of fifteen judges—ten focusing on the investigation of corruption crimes and five on anti-corruption civil cases.

Date	Event
1 March 2021	The European Union–Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) agreement enters into force. It was signed on 24 November 2017.
20 June 2021	Early parliamentary elections take place in Armenia. The political party Civil Contract, led by Nikol Pashinyan, wins 54% of the votes.
2 July 2021	Thirty-three Armenian non-governmental organisations call on the Armenian government to establish a fact-finding commission and implement political assessments of state capture, vetting, and an effective legislative framework for the recovery of property and stolen assets.
2 July 2021	The European Commission adopts ‘Recovery, resilience, and reform: post-2020 Eastern Partnership priorities’ as a renewed agenda for the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) that contains resilience at its core. It aims at increasing trade, economic growth, and jobs; investing in connectivity; strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law; supporting the green and digital transitions; and promoting fair, gender-equal, and inclusive societies.
9 July 2021	The Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi announces a € 2.6 billion investment package for Armenia for the next five years. The package invests in five flagship projects: transport connectivity, resilience and recovery of the Southern provinces, energy efficiency and renewable energy, digital transformation, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises.
2 November 2021	A public discussion on ‘The course of judicial reforms in post-revolutionary and post-election Armenia’ is organised by the Armenian Ministry of Justice with the support of the Partnership for Open Society initiative.
15 December 2021	The Armenian government expresses its commitment to resilience as the main policy objective within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.
23 January 2022	European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia Toivo Klaar states in an interview that EU–Armenia relations are developing in a positive direction given the limited opportunities for cooperation.

The Impact of Language on Resilience in Georgia’s Minority Communities

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Abstract

This paper is intended as a contribution to discussions of the concept of resilience in linguistics, with a focus on minority language speakers in Georgia. For our study, representatives of three of Georgia’s largest minority groups—Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Chechens—have been interviewed. The sociolinguistic situations of the respective speech communities in Georgia only partially overlap, but all three ethnolinguistic communities maintain a strong cultural identity and they rarely engage in ethnically mixed relationships. The goal of the study is to give insights into the current language situation seen from the native speakers’ viewpoint and to testify as to whether language attitude and knowledge can benefit the resilience of minorities in the majority community.

Introduction and Theoretical Background

In linguistics, the concept of resilience has so far mainly been applied to languages as a whole, i.e., languages as

complex adaptive systems, and their capacities to go through phases of (enforced) change caused by domination of other languages and critical demographic and

economic factors that negatively impact the speech communities. In other words, resilience linguistics has drawn primarily on ecological resilience within the discussion on language vitality and how it can be achieved (e.g., Roche 2017; Bradley 2019). Minority languages can be resilient towards domination by majority languages, language shift or language death thanks to prestige, positive language attitude, financial and political support and other factors.

Another conceptualisation of resilience, namely psychological resilience of individuals, focuses on the processes of staying resilient through the native minority language. The role of culture and language in helping members of minority communities to respond to disturbing events has been investigated, e.g., for Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq (Capstick/ Delan 2018), for immigrant youth groups (see the overview by Motti-Stefanidi 2018) and for indigenous communities in Greenland and Canada (Berliner et al. 2012; Kirmayer et al. 2012). Of particular importance in this respect is the function of language as a positive identity marker (Bradley 2019: 515).

In this paper we examine both types of resilience, and as case studies we have chosen to focus on Chechens, Azerbaijanis and Armenians in Georgia. The languages belong to three different language families (the Indo-European language family, Turkic languages, and Northeast Caucasian language family, respectively). The rationale behind choosing these ethnolinguistic groups is that they maintain their own strong cultural identity, which is also manifested in generally being members of religious communities other than the Georgian Orthodox Church, and they comparatively rarely engage in ethnically mixed relationships (e.g., Storm 2019: 51). The minority communities use their native language for everyday communication and sometimes even do not acquire Georgian, which de facto excludes them from full participation in social and political activities of the country in which they live.

For our study we used a qualitative semi-structured interview method. From each of our three target groups (Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Chechens residing in Georgia) we interviewed 10 members (5 males and 5 females) aged 20 to 30. Respondents were identified through personal contacts of one author (Natia Botkoveli). Because of this, a number of respondents have a university degree in philology and ties to Tbilisi. All the respondents spoke Georgian fluently or natively, such that the interviews could be conducted in Georgian.

The Sociolinguistic Situation of Azerbaijanis, Armenians and Chechens in Georgia

Of the three South Caucasian countries, Georgia is the most heterogenous in terms of ethnic groups and

languages. Georgia is home to all four Kartvelian languages (Georgian, Mingrelian, Svan and Laz), one West Caucasian language (Abkhaz), pockets of Northeast Caucasian languages (in particular Chechen and Udi), Indo-European languages from various subbranches (e.g., Ossetic) and Turkic languages. The largest minority speech community of Georgia is the Azerbaijanis, followed by Armenians. Estimations of the number of Azerbaijanis living in Georgia vary between 233,000 (GEOSTAT 2016) and 500,000 (Storm 2016). According to the Census of 2014 (GEOSTAT 2016), there are around 168,000 Armenians in Georgia (not considering the around 60,000–70,000 Armenians in Abkhazia). Members of these minority communities are usually Georgian citizens.

During the Soviet period, Russian had a special status as *lingua franca* among all languages spoken in that multi-ethnic and multilingual state and therefore minority groups were not encouraged, let alone obliged, to learn the majority ('titular') language of the republic where they were residing. Instead, they usually attended Russian schools and used Russian for communicating with the majority society. This situation has thoroughly changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, but the Soviet past still impacts the sociolinguistic situation of the successor states, including Georgia. Today, the only official language at the national level in Georgia is Georgian. Since the independence of Georgia in 1991, language policy has tended to favour Georgian over all other languages (Storm 2016).

Small minority groups are largely bilingual, speaking both their native language and Georgian. But this does not fully apply to the more numerous Azerbaijanis and Armenians. One reason for this is that the majority of them live compactly in rural areas of Georgia—Kvemo Kartli for Azerbaijanis and Samtskhe-Javakheti for Armenians—that border with the corresponding nation states (Azerbaijan and Armenia). In the Azerbaijani- and Armenian-speaking areas as well as in Tbilisi, there are schools in which the language of instruction is Russian, others in which it is Georgian and schools that teach in Azerbaijani and Armenian, respectively (Korth et al. 2005, Tabatadze 2019). Through various programmes, the teaching of Georgian as a second language in Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Tbilisi has been extended and improved, in particular during the second presidential term of Mikheil Saakashvili from 2008 to 2013 (Blauvelt/ Berglund 2016).

Even so, the overall success of Georgian language educational efforts has remained to this point limited. There are several reasons for the lack of widespread acquisition of the Georgian language among these groups, among others lack of funding and of qualified teachers and suitable teaching materials, but other reasons per-

tain to questions of identity, social status and recognition. In any case, limited knowledge of the state language leads to social, political and economic marginalisation (Storm 2016). For instance, the number of students belonging to ethnic minorities who fail the Unified National Exams that are required to enter Georgian universities is still very high (Blauvelt/ Berglund 2016; Tabatadze 2019). In fact, many young Azerbaijanis and Armenians go to Baku or Yerevan for higher education. Nevertheless, minority groups in Georgia mostly consider it to be necessary to learn the state language, and the number of pupils attending minority schools is slowly decreasing (Korth et. al. 2005; Wigglesworth-Baker 2018; Storm 2019: 58).

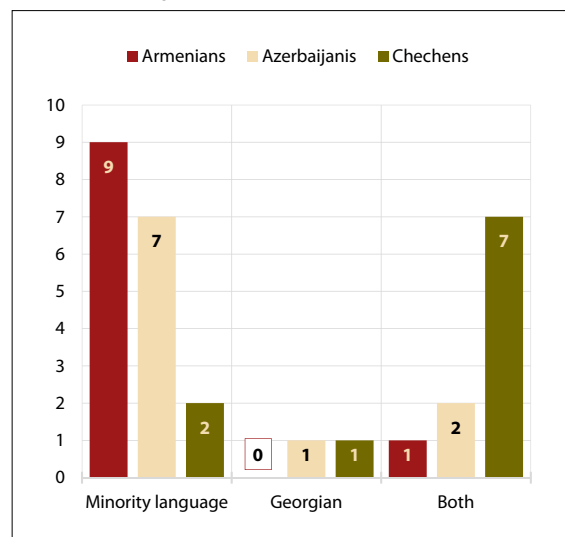
The situation for the Chechen community is quite different. First of all, the Chechen population in Georgia comprises around 6,000 to 7,000 people (Sedlářová 2011; GEOSTAT 2016) and is thus much smaller than the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities. Chechens live in six villages in the Pankisi Gorge, which borders with Chechnya (Russian Federation) to the north, and speak the Kist dialect of Chechen. They are bilingual in Georgian and Chechen (some also speaking Russian) and attend Georgian-speaking schools. In Georgia, Chechen is used only as an oral language. It is not regularly taught in school, though optional Chechen classes have been organised by local language activists. In neighbouring Chechnya, Chechen has official status but it normally not used as medium of education and is only taught as a subject in schools and universities.

Mother Tongue, Language Attitude and Identity

The concept of a ‘mother tongue’ is not always clear in multilingual communities because it is not necessarily the language that a speaker knows best or uses most. Often the mother tongue is the language with which speakers have the closest emotional links and which they were exposed to in their family during their childhood. In some speech communities, language plays an essential role and there are strong ideas about language ideology according to which one can have only one mother tongue, as one has only one mother. Other communities are more pragmatically oriented and do not have a monolingual language ideology. These different views are reflected in our data presented in Figure 1. Armenians and Azerbaijanis favoured their respective minority languages, whereas most Chechens consider both Georgian and Chechen languages as their mother tongue.

Armenians demonstrated the most homogeneous attitude. They take pride in their mother tongue and knowledge of Armenian is a marker of being dedicated to the community and of ethnolinguistic identity. By contrast, language attitude towards Georgian is rather

Figure 1: Mother Tongue as Identified by the Respondents



instrumental in the sense that the language scores high with respect to importance and utility.

‘No one can argue that the Georgian language isn’t important in this country. Although I am happy with my Georgian language skills, I still try to improve my knowledge, read books or write something in Georgian. I need Georgian to be successful person, and I need to maintain my Armenian because it is my mother tongue and it allows me to communicate with my community.’
Armenian (25, female).

Linguistic attitude can impact language use and is therefore important when it comes to minority languages and possible language shift towards the majority language. All Chechen respondents held very positive attitudes toward the minority language. Interestingly, two speakers from the Armenian group and one speaker from the Azerbaijani group stated that they would have had ‘a better life’ had they been born into a monolingual Georgian family. In these cases, bilingualism was seen more as a struggle rather than an asset, and when it comes to resilience, we can hypothesise that the fact of being a member of a minority group and knowledge of a minority language can have a negative impact on individual psychological resilience.

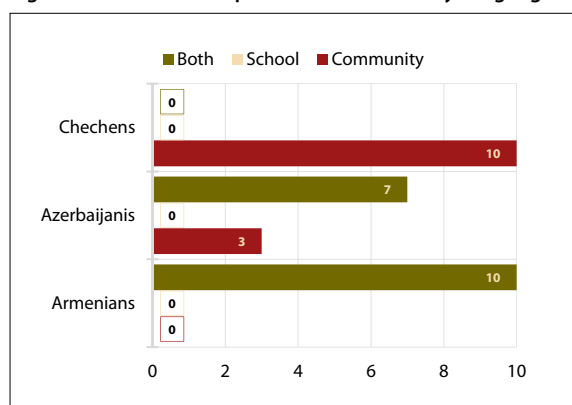
However, in practise ideologies and linguistic attitude often differ from actual linguistic behaviour, and this is also reflected in our data. The majority of our respondents believes that their traditional culture cannot survive without its language. At the same time, only 60% of all interviewees stated that it is important to maintain their language and that they teach or would teach their mother tongue to their children.

Education

Education is obviously an important issue with respect to minority languages. This concerns the language(s) of education and the teaching of individual languages as subjects, be it so-called ‘mother-tongue education’, which is based on the assumption that students already speak the language, or be it second or foreign language teaching. McCarty et al. (2008: 300) argue that, if a dominant language is used as the primary or only medium of instruction, the minority language is not likely to survive because indigenous and minority students educated in an alien language are not likely to pass on their mother tongue to their children and grandchildren.

Figure 2 summarises our data on the place of acquisition of the respective minority languages. We differentiate between the school and the community (including one’s own family) as the two major places where languages are learnt and used.

Figure 2: Place of Acquisition of the Minority Languages



Our data reflect the different sociolinguistic situations in the three communities. Only Armenians and Azerbaijanis have the opportunity to receive education in their own languages, whereas Chechen is not used as medium of instruction. All Armenians who we interviewed have embraced the opportunity to further develop their minority language skills at school as well as in family settings. Azerbaijanis demonstrated more variation in that regard, because some parents decided to send their children to Georgian schools to help them to better integrate into the Georgian culture, and based on the data, it seems this trend is getting stronger. For example, one of our Azerbaijani respondents who works at the local school in Marneuli (a town in Kvemo Kartli) said:

‘Right now, there is almost a competition between the young parents to have their children as fluent in Georgian as possible — they often hire private teachers for them. This practice is not appreciated by our grandparents, but we

are young and we see that without Georgian, our children will not be successful.’

Azerbaijani (28, female)

Thus, among young Azerbaijanis Georgian is seen as necessary and instrumental for future study and job possibilities in Georgia. One Azerbaijani respondent even maintained that minority language classes at school are unnecessary and Azerbaijani language teaching should take place on a purely voluntary basis as an extracurricular activity.

Armenians and Azerbaijanis who have received education in their minority languages have expressed almost identical attitudes towards language classes, textbooks and teachers. According to the respondents, many teachers demonstrated negative attitudes towards the fact that some of their students embraced bilingualism:

‘My Armenian language and literature teacher was a bit old-fashioned and believed that if I studied Georgian very well, I would forget Armenian, which, of course, never happened.’

Armenian (28, male)

Teachers’ incompetence was also named as one of the most significant issues with schooling. Not to speak of many teachers not being professionals in their field, teachers often spoke only one language, either Georgian or the minority language, which made it difficult to give comprehensive explanations and clarify complicated terminology. Another pertinent problem concerns accessibility of textbooks and teaching materials. Armenian and Azerbaijani students receive their language and literature textbooks from Yerevan and Baku, respectively. However, the students did not always get enough books for each student to receive one of their own:

‘When I was a student, we were getting our books from Armenia. The books which were at the school library were not enough, and at least three students had to share one book. Of course, this was causing lots of inconveniences.’

Armenian (25, female)

As stated above, Chechens face a different and more complicated situation. In 2013, with the support of the United Nations, Chechen language activists from Georgia reached their long-time goal of introducing their minority language at schools as a separate subject. However, after one year the financial support was terminated and the future of Chechen lessons was questioned again. In order to keep up the momentum, the representatives of the local community sent a letter to the respective authorities in Tbilisi asking permission to teach Chechen as a compulsory subject; in the end, they were only authorised to teach it as an optional sub-

ject to the children who want to take it. The decision had been justified with the statement that Chechens are not a national minority according to governmental officials in Tbilisi, and therefore have no right to education in their mother tongue. As a result of this decision, some local schools gave up on the idea of teaching the minority language, while others tried to maintain it. The only way to get the necessary textbooks was now to reach out to friends and family living in Chechnya and send books from there to Georgia. A few of our respondents have been involved in these processes, and they spoke about the challenges:

'We were promised that the textbooks would be prepared and published in Georgia, but it never happened. So from 2017 to now I have had to call my friends in Grozny and ask them to buy the textbooks there, then I simply rip some pages out of those books, propagandist pages which promote Kadyrov, Russia, Putin...'
Chechen (30, male)

Unsurprisingly, the majority of Chechen interviewees think that the Georgian government has to take more responsibility when it comes to supporting minority groups and languages.

Discussion

The pictures of the three minority communities that we can draw based on our data show some similarities, in particular with respect to their knowledge of Georgian and its practical value, but also a number of differences concerning language ideologies. All our interview partners were at least bilingual and generally have positive attitudes towards the majority society. In particular those respondents who believe their future professional lives lie in Georgia accept the necessity of a good command of Georgian as the national language of the country of which they are citizens. Such an attitude is more instrumental for Chechens than for Azerbaijanis and Armenians because the functional domains of the Chechen language are smaller. Azerbaijani and Armenian are fully-fledged national languages that cover all functions of public and private life in the respective countries, but this does not apply to Chechen. In our data, this difference is reflected in the fact that all Armenians and the majority of the Azerbaijanis acquired their languages not only in the community, but also in school. Such schools are nonexistent for Chechens, who therefore all learned the language solely in their community.

The language ideologies of the three communities show some further interesting differences in terms of the role of the mother tongue. Armenians demonstrate the highest sympathy for a monolingual language ideology,

and community members express strong attachments to the language. This fits into previous research on language ideology and linguistic attitudes of Armenians. For instance, a study of Armenians in St. Petersburg has shown that for the Armenians living there, a similar language ideology prevails: 'speaking Armenian is not necessary, while regarding it as a value is an obligation' (Tokmantcev 2014: 221). And even in a small Armenian community such as the one in Jordan, where only around 4,000 Armenians live and the shift to Arabic has reached a very advanced stage, the Armenian language continues to be an important symbol of identity (Al-Khatib 2001). We hypothesise that a language ideology that places Armenian above any other language might be due to the long history of literacy and the close relationship between language and religion.

By contrast, for Chechens a bilingual language ideology dominates. This may be due to the relatively short history of literacy and the resulting clear functional division between Chechen as the oral language of the community and Georgian as the written language in the public domain. Azerbaijanis are somewhat in the middle in the sense that they have a less pronounced monolingual ideology than Armenians and show a greater sympathy towards bilingualism, but not as much as the Chechens. Possible reasons for this can be found in the historical development of the Azerbaijani language and connecting language ideologies. Azerbaijani does not have a close link with religion as Armenian does, nor does it have a comparably long history of literacy or implication of uniqueness as Armenian. However, it is also not a minority language that is restricted to the private sphere and by and large used only orally as Chechen is. The recognition of Azerbaijani as a separate language that is distinct from Anatolian Turkish varieties and its development into a full-fledged national language started comparatively recently. The language has gone through numerous alphabet changes in the past hundred years. Since the independence of Azerbaijan there have been clear tendencies toward nationalism: the concept of 'Azerbaijanism' (as opposed to 'Turkism') has been introduced, and a distinct Azerbaijani culture that is different from Turkish culture has been promoted (Tokluoglu 2005). Thus, we hypothesize that language attitudes of Azerbaijani speakers in the homeland and in Georgia will continue to shift towards a more monolingual ideology as is dominant among Armenians.

With respect to resilience, in terms of language vitality, all three minority communities are doing well. We did not observe language shift even though there are some indications, in particular within the Azerbaijani community, that language attitudes might change towards preference for the majority language Georgian. Our data also showed that the impact of minor-

ity languages on individual resilience is ambiguous. As markers of group identity and contributors to collective values they can be a source of pride, and thus positively influence resilience. On the other hand, if a minority

ethno-linguistic group is stigmatised, speakers may conceal their linguistic knowledge and the minority language may be experienced as causing stress and thus negatively influence psychological well-being.

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Reaching across the Atlantic to Support Resilient Self-Defence for Georgia

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Abstract

The Eastern Partnership and closer integration with European Union (EU) Member States has had an undeniable impact on democratization and economic progress for Georgia. Brussels has demonstrated its commitment to support Georgia's security and territorial integrity through the EU's third-party mediation role during the 2008 Russia–Georgia war and its ongoing unarmed civilian border monitoring mission. However, the EU contends with disparities between and contestations from its Member States regarding collective defence and security decisions. Therefore, support from other actors is also critical for establishing resilient defence capacity in Georgia. Georgia's participation with NATO and bilateral agreement with the United States offer valuable means through which Georgia can meet its security and defence objectives. This article discusses these partnerships in order to show that they provide a unique contribution that is necessary for establishing resilience in Georgia's security and defence capacity alongside the democratic, political, and economic objectives of the EU–Georgia partnership.

Introduction

Georgia has closely aligned itself with EU norms and standards since joining the Eastern Partnership in 2009. Additionally, the EU offered to be the sole third-party mediator during the 2008 Russia–Georgia war and still monitors borders, although from an unarmed position via a peacekeeping mandate.¹ The close relationship and strategic partnership between Georgia and the EU has been an important priority for both sides. Nevertheless, the lack of immediate EU accession prospects has led the Georgian government to take more control over its European integration, and insist on better, or more concrete, recognition of its democratization and economic progress from Brussels (Makszimov 2021). Given the unexpected and divergent outcomes of the Eastern Partnership instrument, the initial ambitions for EU Membership for Eastern Partner countries have lately been

called into question (Kakachia et al. 2021; Lebanidze 2020). Not all the Eastern Partners have the same concerns, opportunities, or interests, and this is reflected in the different paths the partnership processes have taken.

For Georgia, the push to become an EU Member State can be explained not only by economic benefits, but also the pressing security concerns with regard to Russian aggression and continued occupation of Georgian territory. Support for these concerns from the EU is critical. However, the EU's internal defence and security policy mechanisms are prone to longstanding contestations, and at times disparity between Member States, that can cause delays or stalls in decision-making (Maurer/ Wright 2020 2021). Therefore, it is not able to target increasing military or defence capacity abroad as would a state-level actor or security-oriented organisation.

1 European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, <https://www.eumm.eu>. For their mandate, see 'Our Mandate', https://www.eumm.eu/en/about_eumm/mandate.

Roughly fifteen years before the 2009 launch of the Eastern Partnership, Georgia formalized its partnership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Georgia also formally entered a strategic partnership with the United States of America (U.S.) in the same year that the Eastern Partnership was enforced. These decisions were fundamentally important to Georgia's ability to protect and defend itself, and key factors in Georgia's realignment with its Euro-Atlantic allies since its independence. This article discusses how, in addition to the EU's contributions to Georgia, those from the U.S. and NATO are also critical and directly support Georgia's defence and security priorities.

U.S.–Georgia relations: A Practical Approach to Supporting Georgia's Security and Defence Capacity

In his inaugural address, former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili strategically affirmed Georgia's return to a 'western' version of democracy, claiming that Georgia's 'steady course is towards European integration'.² Saakashvili also set a precedent to join NATO as a full, official member, naming memberships with the EU, NATO, and other European and Euro-Atlantic intergovernmental organisations with equal importance, considering Georgia to be equally qualified for such memberships (Smolnik 2020; Welt 2010). President Salome Zurbishvili, in office as of 2018, additionally expressed a belief that Georgia belongs in the EU as a distinctly *European* institution; however, she recalled Georgia's substantial participation and contributions to NATO efforts, stating, 'Georgia has never been closer to NATO'³ (see also Gotev 2019).

While not a full NATO member, Georgia joined the NATO Partnership for Peace programme in 1994, thus securing a place in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council,⁴ with the U.S. acting as a key supporter for Georgia's NATO participation and involvement (Smolnik 2020; Socor 2018). While the EU and its Member States have stepped up to support Georgia since its independence in 1991, the U.S. has also been a strategic and supportive partner (Smolnik 2020; USDS 2020; Welt 2010). Consequently, the U.S.–Georgia partnership process is an important foreign influence in Georgia. The Defense Cooperation Agreement between the U.S. and Georgia was signed in 2002, and the U.S.–Georgia Charter

on Strategic Partnership was established in 2009—the same year the Eastern Partnership entered into force.

The U.S.–Georgia Charter features four core areas of cooperation built from the 'shared beliefs' between the two countries: (1) defence and security, (2) economy, trade and energy, (3) strengthening democracy, and (4) civil and cultural exchange (USDS 2009). The Charter is not a legalised or wholly conditional instrument, and generally covers a wide range of issues and opportunities for cooperation. Its flexibility corroborates a feasible level of openness in case of government or institutional change in either country. It additionally emphasises shared goals for Georgia as a European nation. The Charter's Principles of Partnership explicitly state that a Georgia 'capable of responsible self-defence, contributes to ... a Europe whole, free and at peace' and emphasises a shared goal for "the full integration of Georgia into European and transatlantic political, economic, security, and defense institutions as Georgia meets the necessary standards' (USDS 2009).

Georgia demonstrates a strong appreciation for the U.S. as a key strategic partner. Georgia has partnered with the U.S. and NATO on many military operations since the 1990s, including in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan, where, for the latter, Georgia was the largest non-NATO contributor of military personnel, and deployed the most troops per capita than any country (USDS 2020). The U.S. has also provided substantial financial support and training for Georgia's military, forming close alliances between the two countries' armed forces with the aim to support Georgia's territorial integrity against Russia (USDS 2009, 2020). A full-scale direct training initiative between the U.S. and Georgian armed forces was established via the Georgia Defense Readiness Program (GDRP) in 2018 (USDS 2020). In order to sustain and amplify the progress made with the GDRP, as well as to strengthen organisational coordination with NATO, the Georgia Defense and Deterrence Enhancement Initiative formally began in December 2021 (Garamone 2021).⁵ Reiterating the U.S.–Georgia Charter, the security initiative's next phase further targets a future in which Georgia is highly capable of self-defence. While the EU acted as the third-party mediator during the 2008 Russia–Georgia war and monitors borders still, it does not have its own army, as such. Alternatively, as a nation-state, the U.S. is the strategic partner that is

2 'Georgia Swears in New President', BBC News, 25 January 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3426977.stm> (accessed 16 February 2022); 'EU integration a key aim of Saakashvili', Irish Times, 26 January 2004, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/eu-integration-a-key-aim-of-saakashvili-1.1131478> (accessed 16 February 2022).

3 'President Zurbishvili Talks EU, NATO Integration, Occupied Territories', Civil.ge, 13 October 2020, <https://civil.ge/archives/374893> (accessed 12 February 2022).

4 'Relations with Georgia', NATO Topics: Partnership and Cooperation, Relations with individual partner countries, 12 April 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_38988.htm (accessed 10 May 2022).

5 'Georgia Defense and Deterrence Enhancement Initiatives: Fact Sheet', U.S. European Command Public Affairs, 14 October 2021, <https://www.eucom.mil/document/41687/gddee-public-fact-sheet.pdf> (accessed 16 February 2022).

best equipped and more capable of providing direct assistance and hands-on cooperation aimed towards preparing Georgia to defend itself.

Furthermore, the U.S. has not been silent regarding what it considers to be less-than-sterling human rights and democracy norms in Georgia (Smolnik 2020; USDS 2019a). However, rather than attempt to closely manage the country's democratic progress or development, the U.S. continues to offer precisely what it promised in the 2009 Charter, which was neither overly ambitious, out of immediate reach, nor excessive for U.S. resources (USDS 2009, 2019b). Still, the U.S. also provides financial assistance and support for Georgia's democratic transition, has established closely monitored economic bilateral relations, and supports Georgian participation in other multilateral organisations (Smolnik 2020; USDS 2009). The EU's physical proximity to Georgia may support their border-monitoring mission,⁶ but the U.S. has made clear its support for Georgia against Russian aggression (USDS 2009, 2020). Unlike the EU's incentivised yet conditional and more normative approach to partnership with Georgia, the U.S. has kept its support well defined and tangible from a shorter-term perspective that does not require comprehensive reforms or deep integration in order to produce the targeted positive outcomes. Therefore, strong Euro-Atlantic ties taken all together are necessary to fully appreciate and accurately portray the impacts of the support given towards Georgia's transition.

The U.S. appears to be glad to share the responsibility with the EU to support democracy, stability, and progress for Georgia and the broader former Soviet space (DOD 2018: 2, 10; Smolnik 2020; The White House 2017: 25–26, 46–47). The differences in approaches suggest that the U.S., secure in its military ability and the economic opportunities it offers, seems to avoid an ambitious or highly conditional partnership framework. While the EU's evolving partnership with Georgia was initiated in view of potential membership, which would necessitate comprehensive reforms and policy integration (Haukkala 2011), for the U.S. it is enough that the two actors profess shared goals. Similar reforms are required before securing full NATO membership as well, and continued defence cooperation with the U.S.

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allows Georgia to demonstrate its potential. The U.S.–Georgia partnership framework has demonstrated consistent, stable, and resilient outcomes for the positive relations between the two countries, and has allowed Georgia to bolster its Euro-Atlantic and global cooperation while navigating its path towards its targeted EU and NATO memberships.

Conclusion

Although the U.S. has stated that it prefers formerly Soviet countries, like Georgia, to establish stable democratic governance systems, its partnership agreement with Georgia is designed with just the essential elements in order to avoid impractical promises from either side. Given the prominence of the U.S. as a global actor, this partnership approach is in Georgia's best interest because it assumes a position that can directly contribute to both the security and defence objectives of NATO and the EU–Georgia partnership's focus on democratization, cultural exchange, and economic progress.

Conflict with Russia may have led Georgia to rely on more physically approximate support that the EU volunteered to provide in the form of third-party mediation during the 2008 war with Russia, and later with the border-monitoring mission. No other institution or allied country has similarly provided support entailing physical presence. It is also notable that while Georgian troops have been included in U.S.-led coalition operations and NATO missions, these deployments were stationed outside of Georgia and outside of the Caucasus. Given Russian occupation of Georgian territory, and the EU's border-monitoring mission as the sole third-party border control, Georgia may likely rely on the EU's physical presence on a long-term basis to further deter Russia (see Lebanidze et al. in this volume). Georgia will likely continue to maintain a close partnership with the EU for economic, political, and security reasons, yet its EU partnership agreement—and potential EU Membership—is just part of the country's broader global perspective. Georgia's steady relations and partnership with the U.S. and involvement with NATO provide the critical links that strengthen its Euro-Atlantic ties and support its participation in the global system.

6 European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia website, <https://www.eumm.eu>. See also Welt 2010.

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The Resilience-Security Nexus in the South Caucasus: Can the EU Promote Resilience without Engaging in Geopolitics?

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Abstract

This article seeks to explore whether and to what extent the ‘resilience turn’ in the European Union’s (EU) foreign policy-making affected the EU’s (lack of) actorness in the South Caucasus region in security-related areas such as conflict and crisis management and geopolitical rivalries. While Brussels has intensified its policies in most policy sectors, the EU and its member states continue turning a blind eye to geopolitical dynamics in the region. Yet, recent empirical evidence from Armenia and Georgia shows that decoupling of sectoral cooperation from security-related issues is not sustainable in the long term since, if left unchecked, geopolitical risks can easily thwart the progress achieved in sectoral policy areas and lead to a lower degree of state and societal resilience. Therefore, the key question remains whether the EU and its member states can sustainably promote state and societal resilience if they continue ignoring geopolitical risks and other security-related issues.

Introduction: Resilience-Security Nexus in EU Foreign Policy Thinking

In this article we explore the impact of the ‘resilience turn’ on the EU’s security governance in Armenia and Georgia. To do so, we examine the resilience-security nexus in EU foreign policy thinking and study to what extent the EU has put it to use in practice in the geographically close and strategically important South Caucasus region. Specifically, we examine the EU’s security governance in Armenia and Georgia—two countries which possess rather limited military and defence capacities and are exposed to severe security risks.

The EU Global Strategy (EUGS) introduced resilience as one of the guiding principles of the EU’s foreign and security policy in 2016. The EUGS was a response to a changed security environment and multiple crises within and beyond the Union. A clear shift can be traced from the European Security Strategy (ESS) adopted in 2003 to the EUGS—‘from transformative power to principled pragmatism’ (Tocci 2017: 494). ‘Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free’ (Council of the European Union 2003: 3) reads the opening line of the ESS, transformed into ‘[N]ever has our unity been so challenged’ in the EUGS. From the point of the adoption of the EUGS in 2016, the resilience approach became the centrepiece of EU external governance. Intended to ‘handle global pressures and local dynamics’ (European Union 2016: 4), the Strategy emphasised the need to build state and societal resilience both within the EU and in its partner countries.

Compared to the EU’s previously transformative agenda, the defining feature of the external dimension of the new strategy built on resilience is the acknowledge-

ment of the limits of the EU’s normative and transformative abilities in its international surroundings (Bendiek 2017: 6). Thus, promotion of state-building and stability via ‘blueprints’ designed in Brussels were replaced with emphasis on local ownership (Wagner/ Anholt 2016: 424). However, while resilience theoretically creates space for a bottom-up approach (Korosteleva/ Flockhart 2020: 156), it also poses a significant risk of being used as an excuse by the EU to decrease relevant efforts and budgets (Wagner/ Anholt 2016: 424–425). Therefore, the EU’s shift towards the above-mentioned ‘principled pragmatism’ has been assessed as unwillingness to commit and scale down its geopolitical actorness (Moga/ Dirdalä 2019). A ‘geopolitical actorness’ of the EU refers to the ability of the Union to compete and engage with systemic rivals, such as Russia and China, in its neighbourhood and beyond. The announced shift has raised doubts about the compatibility of pragmatism and the principles of the EU (Juncos 2017; Joseph/ Juncos 2019). Due to meagre operationalisation, the resilience narrative has not to date been reflected in the policy turn, nor has local ownership increased (Petrova/ Delcour 2020; Kakachia et al. 2021).

To be consistent with the EU vocabulary, in this article we will follow a standard definition of resilience provided by the EUGS that conceptualises resilience as ‘the ability of states and societies to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises’ (EEAS 2016: 23). It is further noteworthy that, while the EU’s resilience agenda transcends all policy issues and geographic areas, its presence is the most visible in the EU Neighbourhood Policy. The EUGS emphasises EU governance in the Southern and Eastern neigh-

bourhood with the focus on state and societal resilience (EEAS 2016). Furthermore, all policy documents published after 2016 explicitly link the EU's neighbourhood regions to the resilience-based EU agenda and the EUGS calls state and societal resilience the EU's 'strategic priority in the neighbourhood' (EEAS 2016: 25). Therefore, the South Caucasus, as a part of the EU Neighbourhood Policy, presents a rich laboratory to study how EU-promoted resilience works in practice.

At the same time, the EU also closely connects the concept of resilience to its security governance. The importance of security governance is enshrined in all documents regulating the EU's external relations. According to the EUGS, 'Internal and external security are ever more intertwined' and security within the EU 'entails a parallel interest in peace in [the EU's] neighbouring and surrounding regions', including 'a broader interest in preventing conflict, promoting human security, addressing the root causes of instability and working towards a safer world' (EEAS 2016: 14). Moreover, security seems to be viewed as a precondition for resilient states and societies: 'A resilient state is a secure state, and security is key for prosperity and democracy' (EEAS 2016: 23). As we can see, in the EU's official language resilience and security are closely connected and build a nexus, with the objective to defend the security and stability of the EU and its neighbours.

For the sake of clarity, while the EU has a very broad understanding of security governance, we focus on the two specific aspects thereof that probably matter most for the EU's neighbourhood regions: conflict management and geopolitical actorness. With regard to the first, the EUGS mentions an Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises—which, like resilience, has a focus on the neighbourhood regions in the East and the South and encompasses multi-phased, multi-level and multi-lateral peacebuilding and conflict-resolution activities—including a security dimension of the conflicts where the EU intends to 'engage more systematically' (EEAS 2016: 28–30). In her speech on the occasion of her election as a President of the European Commission and presentation of her team, Ursula von der Leyen stated that it is the 'geopolitical Commission' that she has in mind, and that 'Europe urgently needs' (European Commission 2019). With this, von der Leyen emphasized the importance of geopolitical actorness has become a significant part of the EU foreign policy narrative. The EU's drive for strategic autonomy, designation of China as a systemic rival and a more hardened language towards Russia (European Commission 2021b) could be viewed as signs of the EU slowly becoming a geopolitical actor. This process has been accelerated after Russia's full-scale

invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and by EU's somewhat unexpected strong counterreaction which included unprecedented sanctions against Russia and economic, political and military support for Ukraine (Council of the European Union 2022).

EU-Induced Resilience-Building in Armenia and Georgia

Since the inception of resilience as a top EU priority in the neighbourhood regions, the EU has issued a few important documents that have guided its engagement in the South Caucasus countries. In 2017, the European Commission (EC) adopted a document on '20 Deliverables for 2020' that identified key priorities and guided EU external governance in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries between 2017 and 2020. The document followed the major EUGS objective of 'increasing the stabilisation and resilience of [the EU's] neighbours' (European Commission 2017: 3) and identified four core areas of engagement: economy, governance, connectivity and society. While strengthening resilience as a final output was not operationalised in the EU documents, it seemed to be an underlying principle across 20 deliverables, from 'climate change resilience' to resilience against 'disinformation', 'energy dependency' and 'hybrid threats' (European Commission 2017). In 2020, the EU declared it had achieved significant progress in meeting the 20 deliverables in the EaP countries, including Armenia and Georgia. Some milestones included updated legislation on gender equality, creation of new job opportunities, financial support to more than 18,000¹ of small and medium enterprises, increased trade volumes with the EU, reforms in the public administration, such as introducing one-stop-shops and e-government services, and joining Horizon Europe, the EU's research and innovation programme for 2021–2027, to name a few. Interestingly, goals under the 'stronger security cooperation' deliverable focused mostly on non-geopolitical issues such as action plans against cybercrime, guidelines to address floods and raise awareness about disasters, and joint investigations between EaP countries and Europol (EU Neighbours East 2020).

The 'resilience turn' was further strengthened in the EU's most recent strategy towards the region, the 'Eastern Partnership Policy Beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience—an Eastern Partnership that Delivers for All' issued in March 2020 (European Commission 2020). The document was saturated with emphasis on resilience across the whole spectrum of policy areas. The Joint Staff Working Document entitled 'Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities' issued in July 2021 further speaks of 'strengthening resilience

1 The number refers to all EaP countries.

as an overarching policy framework' and specifies five long-term objectives: resilient economies, accountable institutions and the rule of law, resilient digital transformation, climate resilience and resilient societies (European Commission 2021a).

In practical terms, since 2016, the EU's conceptual underpinning and practical implementation of its resilience-fostering agenda in Armenia and Georgia has mostly been focused on capacity-building in certain policy sectors and on boosting the sources of resilience, such as strengthening the public institutions and their legitimacy.² Next to following specific deliverables enshrined in EU documents, the EU was also heavily involved in processes of political reform and interparty political dialogue. For instance, the EU-led mediation between government and opposition after Georgia's contested 2020 elections resulted in an ambitious new reform package and stabilisation of the political situation, the aim being to strengthen the resilience of political institutions in the country (Kakachia and Lebanidze 2021). The EU was heavily involved in both countries as a major reform partner, advising and assisting them in wide-ranging reforms from strengthening the rule of law and the judiciary to approximation to trade-related EU acquis. After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU also supported pandemic resilience of Armenia and Georgia by providing epidemiological as well as economic assistance to both countries (Kandelaki/ Lebanidze 2022; European Commission 2021c).

The EU as a Security Actor in Armenia and Georgia

A quick glance at EU documents is enough to see that engagement on security-related issues such as military cooperation, conflict resolution and systemic rivalries with illiberal actors are virtually absent from the EU's resilience-building agenda in the South Caucasus region. In the '20 Deliverables for 2020' issued by the EC in 2017, out of 20 deliverables listed in the document, only one was (indirectly) related to security of EaP states. One of the deliverables focused on 'resilience of the Partner Countries to security threats, including hybrid threats, and to disasters' (European Commission 2017: 31). But the document framed security largely as a technical domestic issue and did not necessarily link it to geopolitical dynamics or territorial conflicts. The action plan to meet the objective was defined accordingly and focused on steps such as fighting against organised crime, arms trafficking and cybercrime or police-to-police cooperation and assistance in develop-

ing strategies for the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Risk Mitigation (European Commission 2017: 31–32). Implementation of the 20 deliverables in Armenia and Georgia resulted in somewhat intensified cooperation in soft security areas, but it did not have any significant impact on issues of protracted conflicts or the deteriorated security situation around the two countries. As the EU's resilience agenda moved forward, the neglect of security-related issues became ever more apparent. For instance, the 2020 communication by the EC about the future of EaP policy beyond 2020 devoted only one paragraph to issues of conflict management and security (European Commission 2020).

This is not to say that the EU's security actorness in the South Caucasus is non-existent. The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) which was launched after the Russia–Georgia war in 2008 is to this day the only international presence in Georgia and provides minimal deterrence against a potential full-scale Russian invasion. In October 2017, Georgia and the EU established the annual Strategic Security Dialogue, in the framework of which the issues of common interest in the field of foreign and security policy, including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), are discussed (Delegation of the European Union to Georgia 2017).³ The EU–Georgia Work Plan on CSDP cooperation includes annual consultations on security and defence and common security policy, cybersecurity, strategic communications, supporting education institutions in defence and security sector, and providing trainings for personnel. In 2021, the European Council adopted a set of decisions establishing assistance measures under the European Peace Facility (EPF) to support Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Mali. The assistance package aims to strengthen domestic resilience and peace, as well as to enhance the capacity and interoperability of local armed forces to contribute to military missions and operations in which Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova participate within the CSDP framework. Georgia is currently the largest contributor per capita among the non-EU countries to the EU operation in the Central African Republic (UK Parliament 2018) and has deployed personnel to the EU training mission in Mali and to the EU Advisory Mission to Ukraine (Bond et al. 2021: 8; Emerson/ Kovziridze 2016: 26–28). For Georgia in particular, the assistance measures include strengthening the capacities of the Georgian defence forces as well as non-lethal medical and engineering equipment, totalling €12.75 million over the period 2022–2024 (Council of the European Union 2021).

² On sources of resilience, see: Stollenwerk et al. (2021).

³ 'Georgia-EU high-Level dialogue on security issues launches today', Agenda.ge, 11 October 2017. Available online at <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2017/2212> (accessed 6 January 2022).

Since 2016, the EU has also taken some minor steps to boost Armenia's security, including its human security. Since 2018, the EU–Armenia security cooperation has been regulated by the EU–Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA). In particular, 'Article 5. Foreign and security policy' of the CEPA notes the importance of dialogue and effective cooperation between Armenia and the EU in the field of common security and defence policy, and, more specifically, conflict prevention, risk reduction, cybersecurity, security sector reform, regional stability, and arms and export controls. Article 7 and 8 further underline the importance of 'Conflict prevention and crisis management' and 'Regional stability and peaceful resolution of conflicts'. However, the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan itself is mentioned just once in the context of Armenia's commitment to its 'peaceful and lasting settlement'.⁴ In practical terms, compared to Georgia, the EU's engagement in security cooperation with Armenia has been more limited. It could be due to the fact that Armenia is anchored in Russia-led security institutions that the EU's impact is more restricted, or also because the EU prioritises its ties with the associated EaP states.⁵ A few minor steps from the EU include the attempts to mediate between Azerbaijan and Armenia by offering a platform for high-level meetings (Barseghyan 2021) and its involvement in the release of Armenian prisoners from Azerbaijani captivity (ICG 2021).

Overall, the EU's low-profile engagement in security-related areas in Georgia and even-lower-profile engagement in Armenia has been subpar considering that the two countries experience existential risks stemming from a destabilised external environment and of protracted territorial conflicts or territorial disputes with the neighbouring states. In Georgia the EU has done little to alleviate the major security-related challenges the country has been facing. Since 2016, Russia has continued its illegal demarcation process alongside the administrative boundary lines between Georgia and South Ossetia without much opposition (Larsen 2017).⁶ The border demarcation or 'borderisation' process has been accompanied by repeated 'accidents' such as kidnappings, detentions and other human rights violations, undermining human security in conflict regions and

adjacent areas. The borderisation process can be viewed as an effective instrument of Russia's hybrid warfare as it stirs social anxieties and contributes to political instability in Georgia and limits the political legitimacy of Georgian state authorities by giving a sense that they are unable to protect the basic human rights of Georgian citizens. The EU's response was to express concern about the issue, but beyond public statements the EU did nothing to put pressure on Russia.

Since the Four-Day War over Nagorno-Karabagh in 2016, the EU has similarly ignored hard security issues in and around Armenia. It is true that the EU has always been more peripheral to the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict and Armenia's security policy (Broers 2021). Compared to Georgia, the EU's playing field in Armenia has always been more limited due to Armenia's close security integration with Russia. However, in the last years the EU's role declined further as it was virtually absent during the recent Nagorno-Karabagh war and the geopolitical conundrum it created.⁷ Meanwhile, Turkey established itself as a military actor and Russia consolidated its geopolitical clout in the region by negotiating a ceasefire and deploying a peacekeeping mission in the Nagorno-Karabagh region. Moreover, the influence of regional formats with participation from the EU or its member states, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Minsk Group, have declined further after the latest Karabagh war. Instead, the new post-conflict formats such as the 3+3 format exclude the EU and are driven by regional illiberal powers such as Russia, Iran and Turkey (Coffey 2021).

The lost war over Nagorno-Karabagh was preceded by the Velvet Revolution in Armenia in 2018 and a new hope for democratic state-building. The post-revolutionary dynamics in Armenia took an opposite turn, revealing the tension between geopolitical and other security-related issues and the country's drive towards democratic and institutional reforms. Armenia's new government under Nikol Pashinyan found it hard to navigate between conducting good governance reforms, keeping good relations with Russia and strengthening partnership with the EU (Poghosyan 2020). Instead, criminal cases against high-level officials close to Russia and the appointments of Russia-sceptic activists to high-level positions in local NGOs alienated the Rus-

4 'Comprehensive and enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Armenia, of the other part'. Official Journal of the European Union L 23/4, 26 January 2018. Available online at [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:22018A0126\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:22018A0126(01)) (accessed 1 February 2022).

5 There is a consensus among representatives of the Armenian expert community that the country needs democratic values, but there is no conviction that they can underlie the foreign policy of Russia or the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Support for democratic reforms is often linked to geopolitical interests of expanding the sphere of influence, where the most important issue for the authorities is the balance between different actors and the selective approach to proposals for cooperation.

6 'Georgia Reports "Borderization" near Gori Municipality Villages', Civil.ge, 18 January 2022. Available online at <https://civil.ge/archives/469473> (accessed 7 February 2022).

7 As during the shorter 'Four-Day War' in 2016, the EU did not assume any role either. About the 'Four-Day War', see: Schmidt (2017).

sian government and made Armenia less resilient against security risks in the region (Poghosyan 2020). A fragile security situation forces Armenia to maintain disproportionately high military expenditures, which has a negative impact on local welfare and quality of human life. For instance, according to the Global Militarisation Index, Armenia was among the top ten per capita military spenders worldwide in 2009–2020 (BICC 2022).

In summary, since 2016, security-related issues have had a negative impact on strengthening state and societal resilience in both Armenia and Georgia. In Armenia, the deteriorated relations with its sole security provider, Russia, and the lost war over Nagorno-Karabagh stopped its democratic momentum, undermined the legacy of the 2018 Velvet Revolution, and resulted in increased political, societal and economic fragility. In Georgia, the continued borderisation process and frequent tensions in Russia–Georgia relations have contributed to political instability and diminished the effectiveness of Georgian institutions, as well as the country's reform capacity.

Conclusion

Since 2016, the EU's resilience-building agenda in Armenia and Georgia has largely bypassed geopolitical and conflict-related issues and has been mostly limited to various policy sectors. The EU provided both countries with significant financial, technical, advisory, and political assistance, which resulted in improved state and societal resilience in certain areas (Kakachia et al. 2021). Moreover, some EU initiatives, such as bilateral cooperation in the area of cybersecurity, also contributed to the security resilience of the South Caucasus states.

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Still, the major challenge to the EU's resilience-building agenda remains the neglect of conflict-related issues and geopolitical risks. Considering the number of geopolitical and other security-related challenges both countries are facing, the long-term sustainability of EU-induced resilience-building can only be achieved if at the same time geopolitical risks are somewhat mitigated. Otherwise, the progress achieved in both countries can be easily reversed. The 2008 Russia–Georgia War and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabagh Conflict are recent examples of how geopolitical risks can undermine the resilience of the EU's small neighbouring countries.

As a result of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, a more security-focused resilience agenda in the South Caucasus and elsewhere may perhaps become a reality sooner than expected by many. The Russia–Ukraine war represents a major turning point which is already shaping both the EU's global agenda and the security and geopolitical environment in and around the South Caucasus. The war has been followed by a political crisis in Georgia as well as by a renewal of low-intensity military tensions in Nagorno-Karabagh. The EU itself is on the way towards fundamentally changing its approach towards its Eastern neighbourhood and becoming a more militarily engaged actor. These developments will certainly affect the EU-promoted agenda of resilience-building, once designed to link the EU's toolbox of mostly civilian and bureaucratic instruments to the local needs of Armenia, Georgia and the other EaP countries. However, more time needs to pass to see whether changes in the EU's Global Strategy can contribute to an emergence of a capable resilience-security nexus in the South Caucasus and beyond.

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