

Connecting the 3Bs: Brussels, Baku, Beijing The EU/UK & China cooperation initiatives for greater connectivity of Eurasia: the role of Azerbaijan

ADA University GCRF COMPASS Signature Conference
16-17 July 2021

GCRF COMPASS: Comprehensive Capacity-Building in the Eastern Neighbourhood and Central Asia: research integration, impact governance & sustainable communities.



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PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE

Connecting the 3Bs: Brussels, Baku, Beijing
The EU/UK & China cooperation initiatives for
greater connectivity of Eurasia: the role of
Azerbaijan

16-17 July 2021

ADA University GCRF COMPASS *signature* conference
BAKU, Azerbaijan (online)

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Concept

This international *signature* conference organised by the ADA University under the aegis of the GCRF COMPASS project brings together a range of top-level international academics, practitioners, policymakers and businesses to explore and discuss existing regional powers’ strategic priorities, instruments and practices in regional connectivity for mutual benefit. A particular focus will be on the role of Azerbaijan as a natural geo-hub for connectivity initiatives, and a test-ground for their success and compatibility. The diverse and thought-provoking conference programme will make this ADA University’s Signature Conference a platform for identifying major trends in cooperation and connectivity, and discussing their implications for the domestic, regional and international development opportunities and challenges. We will explore connectivity as a global mega-trend and extrapolate what it means for the Europe-Asia relationship, and particularly how it affects Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as a geo-connectivity platform targeted by major international stakeholders. Connectivity will be examined through various aspects including geopolitics, social welfare, economics, business opportunities (start-ups) and finance.

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The [GCRF COMPASS project](#) (ES/P010849/1, 2017-21) is an ambitious UK government capacity-building funding initiative, aiming to extend UK research globally, to address the challenges of growth and sustainability in the developing countries. Notably, the COMPASS project at the University of Kent, together with Cambridge University as research partner, seeks to establish ‘the hubs of excellence’ at the top-level HEIs in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, to enable them to become the centres for knowledge sharing and transfer for *research integration, impact governance, and sustainable communities*.

[The ADA University](#) was founded in 2006 as Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, a training institute for young diplomats to meet the urgent needs of the expanding Foreign Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan. ADA was transformed into a full-fledged public university in 2014 and is accredited by the

Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. ADA is home to an international community of approximately 2500 students and circa 200 faculty and staff from 46 countries around the world. ADA is a truly international University with more international students studying here than in any other university in the country. Through a curriculum built around a triad of rigorous major study, electives and general education, combined with experiential learning and exchange opportunities, western style of education, academic excellence, innovation and employability are in the heart of the education process. All courses at ADA are taught in English.

Programme

Connecting the 3 Bs: Brussels, Baku, Beijing

The EU/UK & China cooperation initiatives for greater connectivity of Eurasia: the role of Azerbaijan

GCRF COMPASS ADA University Signature Conference
16-17 June 2021

DAY 1 WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE 2021

14.00-15:00 Official welcome

Moderator: Nargiz Ismayilova (ADA University, GCRF COMPASS National Team Lead)

Dr Anar Valiyev, ADA University Dean of School of Public and International Affairs & GCRF COMPASS partner

Ambassador Kestutis Jankauskas, Head of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan

Dr Taleh Ziyadov, Director-General, Baku International Sea Trade Port, Azerbaijan

Prof Elena Korosteleva, University of Kent, Principal Investigator, GCRF COMPASS project

Dr Siddharth Saxena, University of Cambridge, Co-investigator, GCRF COMPASS project

15:00-16.30 Plenary: Global connectivity agenda and regional priorities

Moderator: Professor Elena Korosteleva (University of Kent)

Prof. Peter Nolan, University of Cambridge & member of IAB GCRF COMPASS, UK

Dr Taleh Ziyadov, Director-General Baku International Sea Trade Port

Rufat Bayramov, TRACECA National Secretary

Lord Teverson, House of Lords & member of IAB GCRF COMPASS, UK

Prof Munira Shahidi, Tajik National University and GCRF COMPASS partner

16.30-16.45 Break

16.45-18.00 Panel I: From camels to trains: transportation, technology and economic connectivity

Moderator: Dr Siddharth Saxena (University of Cambridge)

Husniyye Mammadova, Head of Economic Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Aida Badalova, Advisor to the Minister of Transport, Communication and High Technologies

Syed Shakeel Shah, Director of CAREC Institute

Dr Olga Malashenkova, BSU & GCRF COMPASS affiliate

Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva, Jean Monnet Chair in European Economic Integration, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

DAY 2 THURSDAY 17 JUNE 2021

14.00- 15.30

Panel II: Energy security & green connectivity, through the start-up lens

Moderator: Akhmed Gumbatov, Director of Caspian Centre for Energy and Environment, ADA University

Dr Fariz Ismailzade, Executive Vice-Rector, and GCRF COMPASS partner, ADA University

Dr Elnur Soltanov, Deputy Minister of Energy, Azerbaijan

Elshad Nasirov, Vice-President for Investment and Marketing at the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Valeh Aleskerov, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Alat Free Economic Zone, Azerbaijan

Prof. Xu Qinhua, Renmin University, 'Green China'

Dr Lifan Li, Deputy Director General, Center for the Belt and Road Initiative Studies, SASS

15.30-16.30

Panel III. Critical connectivity: Promoting political stability and resilience in Eurasia

Moderator: Dr Irina Petrova (University of Kent)

Dr Akram Umarov UWED and GCRF COMPASS partner

Prof. Roza Turarbekova, BSU and GCRF COMPASS affiliate

Dr Kavus Abushov, ADA University and GCRF COMPASS partner

Eugene Chausovsky, Non-Resident Fellow with the Newlines Institute in Washington, D.C.

16.30 - 16.45

Break

16.45 - 18.00

Panel IV. COMPASS panel: Connecting 'hearts and minds' - the relevance of inter-cultural connectivity

Moderator: Dr Muzaffer Kutlay (University of Kent)

Dr Nargis Nurulla-Khodzhaeva, Centre for Eurasian Studies of IVRAN, Moscow State University, and GCRF COMPASS IAB

Prajakti Kalra, University of Cambridge and GCRF COMPASS Researcher

Dr Anar Valiyev, Dean, and GCRF COMPASS partner, ADA University

Dr Artyom Nazaranka, Belarussian State University, GCRF COMPASS partner

Speaker Biographies (in order of appearance)

Nargiz Ismayilova, Director of the Center of Excellence in EU Studies and COMPASS Project National Team Leader, ADA University



Nargiz Ismayilova is a Director of the Centre of Excellence in EU Studies at ADA University from January 2014. She holds MA in Law from Baku State University (Baku), and master's degree in Oriental Studies from the same university. Nargiz Ismayilova has extensive experience of work in public administration and the private sector. Her area of expertise includes expert experience in EU funded project management; experience in implementing public administrative reforms, civil service reforms and institutional capacity building in Azerbaijan; participation in EU CIB and IRP implementation; proven experience in formulation, development and drafting of, reviewing and preparing comments to various laws; in staffing policy and performance improvement initiatives. N. Ismayilova was and is involved in design, organisation, supervision and delivery of training cycles and tailor-made training events for civil servants from Azerbaijan.

Dr Anar Valiyev, Dean and Associate Professor of School of Public and International Affairs, ADA University



Dr Anar Valiyev is Jean Monnet Chair in European Studies and COMPASS Project Associate from ADA University. He is a member of several professional organisations such as APSA, Urban Affairs Association. International teaching and research experience of Dr Valiev includes positions of post-doctoral researcher at Masaryk University in Brno (2007-2008), and Fulbright Scholar (2016-2017) at Johns Hopkins University. Dr Valiyev extensively publishes on political development, economics as well as EU affairs and their impact on Azerbaijan. As an acknowledged researcher, he has received the Web of Science Award 2018 as the most productive author for Humanitarian and Social Sciences in Azerbaijan.

Dr Taleh Ziyadov, Director-General, Baku International Sea Trade Port, Azerbaijan



Dr Taleh Ziyadov is Director-General of Baku International Sea Trade Port in Azerbaijan. He holds a Ph.D. degree from the University of Cambridge (UK) and Master's degree from the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University (Washington, DC). He specializes in transport, logistics and energy issues in the Caspian region. Since 2008, he has advised a number of private and public companies as well as international organizations on the matter of transport and logistics in Azerbaijan and the Greater Central Asian region. He is the author of the book, Azerbaijan as a Regional Hub in Central Eurasia (Baku: ADA, 2012), which provides a strategic analysis of the Euro-Asian trade and transportation networks through Central Eurasia, outlining the vision for developing Azerbaijan into a "regional hub" by 2030.

Professor Elena Korosteleva, Principal Investigator (Kent), GCRF COMPASS



Elena Korosteleva is Professor of International Politics and Jean Monnet Chair of European Politics, at the School of Politics and International Relations, University of Kent. Elena is also LSE IDEAS Visiting Professor; and co-founder/ co-director of the Global Europe Centre at Kent. She is the Principal Investigator of the GCRF UKRI COMPASS project (2017-21). Elena's research presently focuses on the concepts of capacity - building; resilience; order formation and multi-order governance. Most recent monographs include *Resilience in EU and International Institutions* (2020); *The Politics and The Political of the Eastern Partnership Initiative: re-shaping the agenda* (2018); *The European Union and its Eastern Neighbours: towards a more ambitious partnership?* (2014); and *EU Policies in the Eastern Neighbourhood: the practices perspective* (2014) – all with Routledge.

Ambassador Kestutis Jankauskas, Head of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan



H.E. Jankauskas is Head of EU Delegation to Azerbaijan since 2017. Prior to this position he was head of mission of European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, Ambassador of Lithuania to NATO, and has held various diplomatic positions.

Dr Siddharth Saxena, Col (Cambridge), GCRF COMPASS



Siddharth Shanker Saxena is Director of the Cambridge Central Asia Programme. He holds PhD degrees in Experimental Physics and Social Anthropology. His research interests are in the areas of religion and identity, knowledge systems, social and political development and institutional history in Central Asia and the Middle East. Dr Saxena has been involved in field-based research in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia and China. His work focuses on the creation of scientific and industrial technology platforms and

studying social and economic developments in Central Asia and neighbouring regions. He was awarded a medal for service to education in Kazakhstan; Presidential Medals by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan; the Magnetism Medal of International Union of Pure and Applied Physics; and was made Honorary Professor by several institutions in Eurasia. He serves on science review committees of European, American and Asian bodies and has created a number of technology start-ups. Dr Saxena is editor in chief of Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies and editor of Cambridge Central Asia Reviews.

Peter Nolan CBE, University of Cambridge



Professor Peter Nolan is the Founding Director of the University's Centre of Development Studies and the Director of Jesus College's China Centre. He is the Director of the Chinese Executive Leadership Programme (CELP), which each year brings Chief Executives from China's largest firms to the University of Cambridge for a three-week training programme, taught by academics and the leaders of international firms. The Financial Times commented: "Nolan knows more about Chinese companies and their international competition than anyone else on earth, including in China". Peter Nolan has spoken at the Chinese Government's annual China Development Forum since its inception in 2000. He has testified at the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission of the US Congress and lectured to the Board of the US-China Business Council. He is a member of the UK Government's Asia Task Force and the China Council of the World Economic Forum. He holds an honorary doctorate from the Copenhagen Business School. In 2009 he was awarded the CBE (Commander of the British Empire) "for services supporting China's integration into the global economy".

Lord Robin Teverson, House of Lords, UK Parliament



Robin Teverson was Member of the European Parliament for Cornwall and West Plymouth between 1994 and 1999, becoming one of the first two Liberal Democrats to be elected to the European Parliament. Before entering the European Parliament Robin spent 16 years in the freight industry, and continues to take an interest in transport policy in Europe and the UK. In 1994 he was elected as Member of the European Parliament for Cornwall and West Plymouth. Robin was appointed Chief Whip of the European Liberal Democrat Group in the European Parliament from 1997 to 1999. Following his period as MEP, he was chief executive of a regional business finance fund in the southwest and is a fellow of

the Chartered Institute of Securities and Investment. He joined the Liberal Democrat group in the House of Lords in 2006, and his focus in the Chamber is climate change and energy issues. Robin has previously sat on the Liberal Democrat Federal Executive and has also chaired the Party's national finance committee. From 2009 to 2013 he was a member of Cornwall Council. He is currently a board member of the Marine Management Organisation and chairs a regional commercial development company.

Rufat Bayramov, TRACECA National Secretary



Rufat Bayramov is national secretary of the Intergovernmental Commission on Azerbaijan of the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA). Previously, he was the secretary of the Coordination Council for Transit Cargo Transportation under the Ministry of Economy.

Ms Husniyye Mammadova, Head of Economic Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Azerbaijan

Ms. Husniyya Mammadova is a career diplomat with 22 years of experience. She held different positions in the economic wing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was posted twice to the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to



the United Nations in New York. During the first assignment, 2003-2007, she served as a delegate of Azerbaijan to the Second Committee and the Economic and Social Council responsible for economic and development issues. In 2014, Ms. Mammadova returned to New York for four years as a Political Counsellor responsible for the agenda of the General Assembly, Security Council and human rights and related issues. In current capacity of Department Director she supervises economic cooperation with the partner countries, global and regional economic organizations and initiatives.

Ms Aida Badalova, Advisor to the Minister of Transport, Communication and High Technology

Aida Badalova is an advisor to the Minister of Transport, Communication and High Technologies in transportation policy and regulation. She previously acted as the advisor to the Director General of the Baku International Sea Trade Port in investments. Her previous experience includes advising international private and public companies in structuring transactions and investments in Azerbaijan and Central Asia. Ms. Badalova holds LLM from the University of Cambridge (UK), MA in International Relations and European Studies from CEU (Hungary), both bachelor's and master's degrees in International Law from the Baku State University (Azerbaijan).

Syed Shakeel Shah, Director of CAREC Institute



Mr. Syed Shah is a career civil servant under Pakistan's Customs Service with extensive experience in public policy, international trade, and regional cooperation, spanning over two decades. Mr. Shah holds MA in International Trade Law and Economics from the World Trade Institute, Switzerland, and M.Sc. in International Relations from Quaid-e-Azam University, Pakistan.

Olga Malashenkova, Belarusian State University



Dr Olga Malashenkova has PhD in Economics, is a post-doctoral researcher under the GCRF COMPASS project. She is also Associate Professor in the Department of International Economic Relations, Faculty of International Relations, Belarusian State University.

Gulshan Sachdeva, Jawaharlal Nehru University



Professor Gulshan Sachdeva is Jean Monnet Chair; Coordinator, Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence; and Chairperson, Centre for European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. He is also Editor-in-Chief, *International Studies* (SAGE) and Book Series Editor, *Europe-Asia Connectivity* (Palgrave Macmillan). His research is focused on Europe, Eurasia, development cooperation and connectivity. He has contributed more than 100 research papers in academic journals and edited books. Some of his recent

publications include *Challenges in Europe: Indian Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan) and *India in a Reconnecting Eurasia* (Washington: CSIS). He holds PhD in Economics from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest.

Akhmed Gumbatov, Director, Caspian Center for Energy and Environment (CCEE) of ADA University



Akhmed Gumbatov is the Director of the Caspian Center for Energy and Environment (CCEE), a core institution of the ADA University dealing with research, teaching, and outreach activities in the field of energy and the environment in the wider Caspian region. Prior to rejoining the ADA University in October 2019, Mr. Gumbatov worked at the World Bank office in Singapore, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) office in New York, and British Embassy in Baku. He holds a BA degree in International Relations from St. Petersburg State University in Russia, MA degree in International Affairs from ADA University, and MPP degree with honors in Development Economics from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) of the National University of Singapore and the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of the Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C., United States.

Fariz Ismailzade, Vice-Rector, ADA University, Azerbaijan



Fariz Ismailzade is Vice Rector for External, Government and Student affairs at the ADA University (since 2011). He joined ADA in 2006 and worked in the positions of Director of Executive Education (2006-2010) and Executive Dean (2010-2011). Mr. Ismailzade is currently pursuing a Doctoral Degree at the Maastricht School of Management. He holds an Executive MBA from IE Business School (Spain), and a Master's Degree in Social and Economic Development from Washington University in St. Louis, and a BA in Political Science from Western University in Baku with one-year interim studies at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. Mr. Ismailzade has done research at the Centre for Strategic

and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C and the Embassy of Azerbaijan in the US. His research interests include political affairs in the Caucasus and Central Asia, energy security, and development.

Dr Elnur Soltanov, Deputy Minister of Energy, Azerbaijan



Dr Elnur Soltanov holds a master's degree in international Relations at the Middle East Technical University and a PhD degree in Political Sciences from Texas Tech University, USA. He has been working as a researcher at the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies in Turkey and engaged in pedagogical activities at Texas Tech University, Slippery Rock University and Thurman State University, ADA University, where he was leading Caspian Energy and Environment Center and School of Public and International Relations. He has been serving as Deputy Minister of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan since 2018.

Elshad Nasirov, Vice-President for Investment and Marketing at the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SOCAR)



Elshad Nassirov, SOCAR vice-president of investments and marketing, has rich experience of diplomatic service in Afghanistan, India, United Nations, Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the USSR and independent Azerbaijan. Since 2005, he has been serving as vice-president of SOCAR on investments and marketing. He was awarded the Glory order, under the Decree of the President of Azerbaijan. He is fluent in Russian, English, Persian, and Indian.

Valeh Aleskerov, Head of Alat Free Economic Zone, Azerbaijan



Since 1992 Valeh Alekberov took the position of vice president of the Azneft state concern and was an advisor to the president of the company. He also has been serving as Chairman of the Foreign Investments Department of SOCAR; since 2005 as Deputy and Deputy Speaker of the Milli Mejlis, Chairman of the Committee for Natural Resources, Energy and Environment. Since 2019 Mr Aleskerov chairs Board of Directors of the Alat Free Economic Zone.

Dr Irina Petrova, GCRF Compass (Kent)



Dr Irina Petrova is a Post-Doctoral Research Associate leading on funding and publications initiatives, as part of the GCRF COMPASS project at the School of Politics and International Relations (University of Kent). She joined the School in 2019 after completing her doctoral dissertation at the University of Leuven. Irina's research interests focus on the interaction of global and local actors in international relations, particularly, the development of the novel approach of resilience-based governance anchored in local preferences and perceptions. Geographically, Irina's research focuses on the European Union, Russia, Eastern Partnership and Central Asian states. Prior to joining Kent, Irina worked as an assistant at the 'Master of European Studies' programme at the University of Leuven teaching courses on Transnational and global perspectives on Europe and Research methods. She also worked as an adjunct lecturer at Vesalius College (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and research associate for the H-2020 UPTAKE project and Jean Monnet Network 'Crisis, Conflict and Critical Diplomacy: EU Perceptions in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine (C3EU)'.

Roza Turarbekava, GCRF Compass Affiliate



Dr Roza Turarbekava is Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Eurasian and European Studies. Her areas of expertise include the Eurasian Economic Union; political transition in Central Asia and regional policy; and the Islamic factor in politics in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Dr Kavus Abushov, Associate Professor in Political Science, ADA University



Dr Kavus Abushov received his PhD in political science from the University of Muenster in Germany and his MA in politics and economics from the Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingostadt in Germany. He later completed his postdoc at the Center of international Studies at MIT. He has had teaching and research stays at the universities of Glasgow, Muenster, Freiburg, IFSH Hamburg. His research interests include security studies, ethnic civil wars, state-building and political economy with a geographic focus on the post-Soviet space.

Dr Akram Umarov, UWED, GCRF Compass



Dr Akram Umarov is Senior Research Fellow at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy. Previously he worked as a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. He received a master's degree in International Relations at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy. He has great interest in security studies, conflict management, public diplomacy, Afghanistan, Central Asian studies, CIS countries, public administration, global security, peace, and development. Akram Umarov is the author of monograph "Afghanistan and regional security of Central Asia: the beginning of XXI century" (in Russian) (UWED, 2017) and book chapter "Donald Trump's Presidency and the Implementation of OBOR in Central Asia" (in "Changing Regional Alliances for China and West", eds. D.Lane, G.Zhu, Lexington Books, 2017). His articles have appeared in "Central Asian Affairs", "Asia and Africa", "National Strategy Issues", "Comparative Politics", "Defence Journal" and other peer reviewed journals.

Dr Nargis T. Nurulla-Khodzhaeva, Moscow State University



A culturologist, an Orientalist and a philosopher, Dr. Nargis T. Nurulla-Khodzhaeva was born and raised in the capital of Tajikistan - Dushanbe, in a family of celebrated cultural figures. Circumstances had it that Nargis obtained a very international background, speaking fluently in different languages, and working in places such as Yemen and Sweden. Nargis studied History and Philosophy in the Tajik State University named after V.I. Lenin, and her PhD thesis was devoted to gender issues. After well received initial success and noteworthy findings, Nargis moved to Moscow and began work on her monographs and doctoral thesis: "Communities in Central Asia", successfully defending it 2013. Her current research interest is Postcolonial development of the Central Asian/Middle Eastern region. Nargis is Associate Professor at Lomonosov Moscow State University (Russia). She is Vice-President at the International Cultural Z. Shahidi Foundation (Tajikistan).

Eugheni Chausovski, Non-Resident Fellow with the Newlines Institute in Washington, D.C.



Eugene Chausovsky is a Non-Resident Fellow with the Newlines Institute in Washington, D.C. Previously, he served as Senior Eurasia Analyst at Stratfor for more than 10 years. His work focuses on political, economic, and security issues pertaining to Russia, Eurasia, and the Middle East

Prajakti Kalra, Research Associate (Cambridge), GCRF Compass



Prajakti Kalra is a Research Associate with the Cambridge Central Asia Forum. She is an affiliated lecturer in the Centre of Development Studies, University of Cambridge. She works on the RCUK funded GCRF COMPASS grant as an Events and Communications Officer in the Centre of Development Studies, University of Cambridge. She has trained as a historian, political scientist, and a psychologist. Her interests are in the areas of the history of the Mongol Empire and Central Asia. She has worked extensively on regional and international organisations (OSCE, OIC, SCO,

Eurasian Economic Union and the OBOR). Her focus is building avenues of communication and exchanges based on historical precedents and bringing local narratives into global speech to best facilitate interaction and knowledge production. Her book, 'The Silk Road and the Political Economy of the Mongol Empire' came out in 2018 (Routledge). Other publications include 'Asiatic Roots and the Rootedness of the Eurasian Project' (in 'The Eurasian project and Europe: Regional Discontinuities and Geopolitics', Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and 'Uzbek Relations with the Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in modern and pre-modern times,' (in Russia and CIS Relations with the Gulf Region Current Trends in Political and Economic Dynamics, Gulf Research Centre, 2009). She is the research, administrative and social coordinator for the Cambridge Central Asia Forum.

Dr Artsiom Nazaranka, Senior Lecturer and COMPASS Project National team Leader, Belarusian State University



Dr Artsiom Nazaranka is Senior Lecturer in History and Chairman of Young Scientists Council at the Belarusian State University Faculty of History. MA in History. Finished PhD course at the Dep. of Constitutional Law of BSU, Intensive program in human rights in RWI, Lund University. Co-author of 8 educational standards, over 15 courses, experienced in developing and evaluation of curricula, ECTS. Author /co-author/ of 6 textbooks for different levels. He took part in implementation of several international projects, incl. Jean Monnet Module "Ethnic Minorities in the European Union" (EMEUE). Belarus National Team Leader for GCRF COMPASS project. Member of UKRI International Development Peer-Review College. Participated in a number of policy-debate activities on sustainable development.

His research focuses on History and Law, ICT Law, EU studies, Public Administration, Records Management & Archives, Higher Education.

Official Welcome

Foreword by Moderator, Nargiz Ismayilova

Good morning, ladies, and gentlemen. It is my pleasure and honour to welcome all the distinguished participants of our International Signature Conference.

The idea of the current conference has arisen some time ago, but unfortunately the conduction of the Conference has been postponed for almost a year due to pandemic. The continuing character of the pandemic has forced us to conduct the event in an online format.

Dear participants, I am pleased to welcome you at GCRF COMPASS International Signature Conference “Connecting the 3Bs: Brussels, Baku, Beijing. The EU/UK & China cooperation initiatives for greater connectivity of Eurasia: the role of Azerbaijan”.

During these two days, you will be able to hear voices of the high-ranking experts, practitioners, and academicians. The particular focus of all the discussions will be dedicated to the role of Azerbaijan, which is a natural geo-hub for all the connectivity processes and initiatives. Implications of cooperation and connectivity and view on them from dimensions of domestic, regional, and international challenges. During these two days we will touch upon global connectivity agenda, how technology affects transportation and connectivity, energy security and green connectivity and cultural connectivity will be discussed.

I believe that this Online Conference will result in important discussions featuring international, regional, and local voices, and practical recommendations for post-pandemic development strategies in Central Eurasia.

I wish you all success.

Thank you for your attention

Welcome by Dr Anar Valiyev

First, I would like to thank all the participants participating in this event and we appreciate your participation. Just a few words about the history of this conference. We have initially thought of this conference specific for the region in 2018. We have invested time into thinking about attracting a title for it. And what we have come up with reminds me of a German plan before the Cold War, it was called “3Bs Project”. At that time Kansler of Germany also wanted to connect 3Bs: Berline-Byzantine (Istanbul)-Baghdad through the railroad. So, our conference is not hinting on colonial aspirations, but sounds attractive. We are hosting this conference right after, ne next day, after significant event for the life of Azerbaijan, which is signing of Shusha Declaration between Azerbaijan and Turkey which envisions opening of a communication and transportation corridor between Azerbaijan and Turkey via Zangazur corridor. Realization of this project will bring under one transportation network the entire region and at the same time integrate into the global network. COMPASS Project is very timely on that also and yesterday within its aegis was held a seminar on Zangazur corridor potential, cost and benefits of opening it up. So, this academic conference will very timely discuss integration of the region into the global network.

Welcome by Dr Taleh Ziyadov

Thank you very much for the invitation and this is my first COMPASS Project Conference. The topic selected is very relevant to the recent development in the region and globally. I am looking forward to discussion of the global connectivity developments and the region's stand in that process. I also believe in the relevance of the timing selected for the Conference.

Two Bs (2Bs) out of three or any more in the region, Beijing, and Brussels, are very much important in shaping developments in the region. Future of Eurasia depends a lot on the quality of connectivity between Beijing and Brussels. Today we are discussing the position and future of Baku in the connectivity network, but Baku can be easily replaced with any other city located between Beijing and Brussels. Looking at the transportation map you will see that railways and highways of Eurasia are quite well connected, but numbers of trains, trade volume happening within the region are a tiny part of the actual trade happening globally. Thus, being connected by infrastructure does not always lead to tangible trade numbers, which means we should look beyond the physical infrastructure. At the same time infrastructure is a prerequisite of successful connectivity. I am looking forward to discussion on how connectivity should change our perception.

Welcome by Professor Elena Korosteleva

I am very much delighted to be part and support the initiative of this timely and relevant conference organised within the eagles of COMPASS Project. COMPASS is one of the first projects funded by the British Government Research Fund with the purpose to develop global partnership and connect hubs of excellence across the world. Within the project we are happy to work with Centers of Excellence across Eurasia. ADA University is one of them. We also work with Belarusian State University, Tashkent National University, University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Uzbekistan, University of Cambridge, and Kent in the UK. Under the project we can work on academic and not only topics that represent our research interest including the idea of better governance, resilience, challenge of pandemic, and practical capacity building issues. We have organised all these into three important pillars of the University: (a) research integration, that has already got tangible results, such as we have been able to bring together scholars from all over the world, raising of new generation of young scholars through our training schools and publications; (b) policy dimension, that helped to connect our research finding to be connected to policy decisions and find most optimal ways in making world more sustainable; (c) community dimension of the project helps us to connect local communities.

This is the first Signature Conference ADA University conducts within the Project, in a sense of bringing up important topics of a global scale and I hope its legacy will last and make a difference.

Welcome by Ambassador Kestutis Jankauskas

It is my pleasure to see familiar faces, thank you for hosting and invitation. Personally, representing one of the Bs (Brussels), I find the conference topic very relevant and interesting. Now Brussels is very busy with the Green Deal, and it will impact our future in the European Union and beyond. We will follow common rules of multilateralism in implementation of the Deal, and that cannot be in isolation. Brussels needs partners.

Connectivity is the future and I believe our world depends on a secure flow of goods, knowledge, and people. Ensuring transparent trade within its borders, the EU works with partners beyond to promote similar approaches to sustainable connectivity. The more connectivity we have, the better we are served. Competition is always a driver for development. We can approach the issue country specific or region specific or intra-regional. There are a lot of issues to work on in transport but also energy connectivity, digital connectivity and most importantly people to people connectivity. Looking beyond the EU borders we particularly approach our immediate neighborhood, Eastern Partnership, which Azerbaijan is part of. EU Delegation is working on its

own Signature conference in Azerbaijan which will be on economic and investment labs, bilaterally and regionally. Our principal policy for Central Asia was updated in 2019 and we also have a Europe-Asia Connectivity Strategy adopted in 2018.

Speaking about transport infrastructure, Port Baku is a flagman here in Azerbaijan and in the region. In partnership we have conducted a number of projects in making the Port green, sustainable and environmentally friendly, through learning and connecting to European partners.

Azerbaijan has high aspirations of becoming another important “B”, a regional transportation hub. In order to turn that into reality we need not only physical infrastructure, but accountability, security, adaptability.

At the end of the last year important things happened when the Southern Gas Corridor started operating. But our partnership does not limit to gas, we also plan to expand it to renewables and Azerbaijan has what to offer in this sphere. We have done a lot of work with the Ministry of Energy in the sphere of regional electricity security and connectivity, and a number of projects on energy efficiency. Digital connection is important. Digital services are part of any discussion of connectivity.

I want to summarize with three points:

- (1) connectivity is also connectivity of people to people. We do all this for people.
- (2) Economic and investment development is important, and Azerbaijan is our strategic partner on that.
- (3) Brussels “B” will be very active and involved in the upcoming years.

I sincerely wish its participants meaningful and productive discussions. Thank you.

Welcome by Dr Siddharth Saxena

First, I want to echo my colleague Prof. Korosteleva’s introduction on aspirations we have within the COMPASS Project. We work closely with ADA University within this project. Regarding our program for the upcoming two conference days. It introduces very well how we want to broaden the scope of the discussion. Key speakers Prof. Peter Nolan has discovered the notion of global connectivity, also the program will feature Dr Syed Shakeel Shah, Director of CAREC Institute that is required to better understand Eurasian connectivity. Very often discussing Eurasian connectivity perspective of India is missed, but our program features Professor Gulshan Sachdeva who is part of the leading think tank on connectivity of Eurasia, not only India. Chinese perspective to be introduced by Dr Lifan Li. We have worked hard to put together all these different perspectives and voices.

Yesterday we have already started discussion about the connectivity on the smaller regional perspective and today we are moving toward global notions. The very important point I want to mention is that post-pandemic connectivity will not be as usual one, not only because of what has changed but also because of what we have learned. Thus, I believe it is very important that throughout the conference we keep in mind that after a pandemic will not happen, a simple restart, lots of things will need to be done differently. For example, 2Bs, Beijing and Brussels, compared to the 3rd B, Baku, are lacking flexibility. They can bring new technology, but any other Eurasian city can bring something disruptive, and they should do so.

So, I am looking forward for flexible academic discussion.

Plenary: Global connectivity agenda and regional priorities

Foreword by Moderator, Professor Elena Korosteleva

The panel, plenary session, is called Global connectivity agenda and, I will add, local and regional priorities. We have learned through our project and the recent years of pandemic that there is nothing global without local, especially in the complexity of the world we live in today. The world we live in today is often characterized as being a VUCA word. This acronym stands for volatility, unpredictability, complexity, and ambiguity of the world today. And the pandemic has clearly shown that none of the global events can be resolved on the level of global institutions. In fact, what is important is the nexus between global and local. Again, taking the pandemic as an example. Global decisions have been important, particularly in questions such as vaccination and so on, but it is the people on the ground who have taken all the responsibility for the crisis. So, having in mind that there is nothing global without local context, today we will look closely at the global connectivity agenda.

Professor Peter Nolan

I believe that distinguished speakers of today's meeting will look at the issue of connectivity from very different points of view. The point of view I am going to view is very broad and historical. My starting point is Fulbright William's "Arrogance of Power". Fulbright asks to think very carefully about something that is very badly studied in international relations, which is psychology. First, I am going to look at connectivity from the view of the west, then of the east and China, and then suggest some ways we might think about connectivity in the future.

First of all, a long-term view of the West on connectivity. I think that three or four hundred years ago was the most interesting time in the west from the perspective of connectivity. When all the way around the Mediterranean including Middle East and north Africa as well as most western Europe were united in a highly connected fashion. Under this united territory was a free trade area with a common currency, common unit measurement, and most importantly a common language, which was the Latin. These territories benefited from peace, a common system of law, trade flourished, and knowledge spread across this vast unified territory. But this time came to an end with the collapse of the system in the 3rd-4th century AD. Europe became disconnected in terms of relationship and that period, called the Dark Ages, lasted for a very long time. Language became fragmented, economic activity and technology went into reverse. The era following this time was the time when the modern states began to emerge. Then we are moving into the next, absolutism era, that was the time of huge wars and pandemics. Legacy of conflict between emerging states has felt deep into culture. It was a time of zero-sum philosophy that was very deeply embedded into how culture developed in this part of the world. This culture then was translated into aggression towards outside of this part of the world. First era of colonialism was followed by the second era of colonialism and imperialism. The rest of the world has watched all these with astonishment, as our aggressive instincts exploded in the First and Second World Wars with modern instruments of violence. This also reflected in the modern world in the very long and full of conflict process of the de-colonization of Vietnam, Algeria, Indonesia, South Asia etc. Institutions of global governance, so-called rule-based national systems, which were essentially constructed by a small group of countries, are essentially based on a hegemonic rule of a small group of countries. So, this is sum up of our complex legacy, zero sum philosophy since the end of the Roman Empire, and all these are very closely connected with the absence of connectivity across different parts of Europe. Under connectivity here I mean "doing things together to better understand each other".

Then we turn to the East, to China. One of the most important two characters in China is "Great Unity". This is deeply embedded to eastern culture with China at the core. It is based on the idea of avoiding chaos which

is characterized as “great discontinuity and non-connectivity”. This connectivity was first achieved in the era of the Ch'in dynasty and the time of Han dynasty. Huge area was united by common rule, common language. Political culture from the earliest days of the Han dynasty was evolving, changing, becoming more complex and meritocratic rule. Very different from Europe, this huge territory was united by deep rooted internal connectivity under the rule of a bureaucratic political class. The core principle of this rule was pragmatic, non-ideological decision-making attempting to meet the needs of the mass of the system. The key characteristics to characterize this from Confucius till to the present day is “all under heaven is the common good”, and this ideology guided the objectives of the Chinese bureaucracy from the ancient time till the present day. This pragmatic system, over two thousand years, tried to combine the power of law with the ethically guided force of the state. Under this unified, connected system, linking together this huge free trade area, China has reached tremendous progress despite meeting huge challenges for the last hundred years. This system has reemerged in the course of the last forty years.

So, here we have two very different systems. In the case of China, it's based around governance focused on ruling within its vast territory without plans to go outside to conquer others. This pragmatic approach with inter-connectivity at the core of the philosophy of the ruling system has remained deeply embedded in China's view of the world.

So, here we have a G7 meeting that has produced a very interesting result, the core of which is very interesting, which is “we must work together to build trust, overcome fear and anxiety, and we should start from the most obvious area of common interest, which is climate change and global warming”. I find this outcome very positive because purpose has changed from a circle of conflicts and de connectivity towards a greater connectivity and mutual understanding, co-working. It will not happen at once, because rationality is back for the common purpose of work for the whole of humanity.

I will stop here. Thank you for attention.

Lord Robin Teverson

Thank you very much for the invitation. Following Professor Nolan, unfortunately I am not that optimistic about the future, although I hope is right in this issue. I have been interested in the mention of Dr Valiyev of Berlin-Baghdad railway in terms of the base for the Baku-Brussels-Beijing idea. Because the Berlin-Baghdad railway project was part of the post colonialism struggle in this part of the world between the British Empire, India and Afghanistan, and the German influence into the Middle East which ended with the First World War. So, I am looking for a very different trajectory for today's conference. At the same time, I am very saddened that today we are speaking virtually about the connectivity and looking very much towards coming to Azerbaijan. I am also a member of the UK's House of Lords, which is UK's second unelected Chamber, and have chaired an EU commission of international relations and defense committee.

Any world atlas or map will demonstrate to you that Azerbaijan is located in the natural crossroads of Eurasia both in regards of North and South and East and West, being hub for both ancient Silk Road, but most importantly to the modern transit projects connecting China and Europe. This overland trade is quicker, probably more expensive at the current circumstances, but still remains to be a very important route. That North-South-East-West relationship is also more important geopolitically now than it has ever been. Azerbaijan is also at the crossroads with Turkey and has an interesting relationship with Russia, which is complicated in general, but particularly complicated in relation to Russia-South Caucasus relations. The region is also on the crossroad Western Europe-China. Currently the region is undergoing a number of geopolitical shifts which I think are really important for Azerbaijan and neighboring states across the Caspian Sea. This region is generally abandoned with the exception of Turkey and Russia, which is absolutely wrong. I predict increasing interest towards the region in the near future.

The most prominent change of the last decades have been the change of the role of China in the growth of the world economy and international trade and great offshoring of manufacturing in many industries from the West to China. And up until a couple of years ago this tendency has been very much welcomed and China has been accepted as a dominant power on the globe. With the presidency of Sin Jin Ping in the last five-ten years has happened a change in the much more assertive attitude of the Chinese Communist Party on the global role of China. As Professor Nolan has mentioned China has never had an expansionist and imperialist outlook, but currently they have become involved in issues with Hong Kong and some artificial islands. Cornerstone in this tendency was the UN's decision in favor of the Philippines regarding islands, Taiwan issue, and human rights issue in Xinjiang province regarding Muslim population. These factors currently are key concerns of the West regarding future relations with China. But does this mean that there will be pushback of global trade with China and decrease towards the discussed region of crossroads? The latest years have seen a certain push towards nationalization, particularly during the Trump administration. There is going to happen a balancing of what is called systemic competitiveness of China in a number of areas including security and world trade. The Western world is very good at compromising, but I suspect the risk of future confrontation in terms of South China, Taiwan being taken back to China. In terms of trade, sanctions have been implemented towards certain individuals as part of the European comprehensive plan on investment, which is expanded to go ahead if the US would not veto it, but now it has been stopped at European Parliament as some of its members also got sanctioned.

It is also true that at the latest G7 meeting a number of areas have been comprehensively discussed such as pandemic, economic recovery and the issue of trade being there. But at the G7 meeting there was a necessity of the western hemisphere to look for alternatives to the Belt and Road Initiative. And maybe it's a gap that South Caucasus can fill. In the NATO meeting that followed in Brussels earlier this week, for the first time in communique China was mentioned as a security issue. And that is a clear indication of tension.

From the UK point of view, after from my point view regrettable leaving of the European Union, the foreign policy was reviewed and as a part of its Britain started to have so-called in into Indo-Pacific and went through list of countries and regions that still were North Atlantic, the most important security area, and Russia is still

an issue of national and European defense. Central Asia and the Caucasus region of Europe were completely left of that integrated review which I find totally wrong.

Coming back to future events and Conference on the Climate Change, that is the area where all regions will have to cooperate and echoing the EU Ambassador, the Green Deal is a very big factor in the future of European financing and cooperation.

And here we come to the Southern gas Corridor that is functioning relatively newly, but in terms of connectivity decarbonization is in the real agenda in Europe and the UK and we already must start thinking beyond this new asset.

I would like to conclude with remarks that I believe Azerbaijan is located in the region that is even more important than crossroads in the past. It is important for the West.

Dr Taleh Ziyadov

Although I was going to start from a different remark, Professor Nolan's comparative introduction into connectivity notions in Europe and China have provoked a range of thoughts. I want to agree on seeing that huge gap between West and East in perception of the notion of connectivity and that gap is filled with central Eurasia has always been there regardless of the commonalities. I fully agree with the introduction of Professor Nolan to the issue of Europe, that under a single system that includes common system, rules, language - trade is obviously flourishing and so is the economy. We have already witnessed a number of completely different systems in terms of rule, laws, way of management, and yet they have credits. This gives a sense that different systems may bring us to a commonly understood, predictable, sustainable way of doing business. And Central Eurasia is a proof of this. Hubs across Central Eurasia have been developing due to trade happening between Europe and Asia. I often bring this example of camels as a mode of transportation. This animal can walk a 40 km a day and this meant that in every 40 km there was a need for a "small hub" - a small hotel and in every thousand km there were big "hubs" - sites such as Baghdad, Samarkand, Jerusalem, Istanbul, with some medium size "hubs" in between, and all these small, medium, and big hubs were connected to each other. With all these, the radius of trade generally was not beyond three thousand kms, which means that Chinese have never travelled to Europe. Mostly trade happened in the direct neighborhood. So, the trade exchange between China and Europe happened through Eurasia, big hubs of Eurasia. And these hubs of Eurasia were not just transition points, they also were value adding, changing goods and culture on the way from China to Europe. And the same went the other way around. Lots of innovation happened in Bukhara, Samarkand, Istanbul as these cities served as hubs for ongoing trade. So, on this point I want to bring the issue to a close, which is a new hub of the XXI century that is emerging during the last decade.



Figure 1

The map I am sharing with on the screen may look like a map with randomly placed dots, but these dots are going to evolve into full scale land based hubs throughout Eurasia that will become major markets across Asia and Europe. They will be primarily located in India, China, Japan, Korea, Middle East and being connected to Europe via Central Eurasia. And as Lort Teverson has pointed out, strategically located Azerbaijan is going to turn into one of the main hubs. Discussion over future hubs should also touch on the topic of kinds of hubs

that will emerge over next decades. These hubs are certainly going to be green, digital, well connected to the network of other hubs, agile, adaptive flexible hubs, implying development of e-commerce, digital technology, faster nature of trade. Manufactory is going to relocate closer to final consumers and this is the gap Azerbaijan aims to fill also. In Alat, located 65 km from downtown Baku, the Port and Free economic Zone are located within it. And this is the hub from where we aim to serve 130 million people living within 1K km from Azerbaijan with an overall GDP of US\$770 B. This issue has never been considered serious before with its opportunity of interconnection between Central Asia, Europe, South direction including India, Iran, and Russia on the north. In our neighborhood, businesses are looking for a stable, predictable, and legally protected framework. This is the environment Azerbaijan has created by passing high standard Free Trade Zone law.

The outcome of the 44 days war between Armenia and Azerbaijan from the perspective of connectivity is opening up a new range of opportunities for the region that will be enhanced with strong peace agreement. Connection of mainland Azerbaijan to its enclave Nakhichevan via Armenia will open up direct connection to Iran and Turkey and further to the Mediterranean Sea. This will only enhance East-West and North-South trade traffic and impact the entire Eurasia.

I want to echo Lord Teverson's note on systemic competitiveness between large players such as China vis a vis the EU. But at the same time regardless of this competition, all the countries of central Eurasia are going to benefit from the economic development that is going to happen in both of these large markets. Examples of that increase in the number of people passing through Eurasia are going to hit a million very soon. This tendency is going to continue regardless of political sympathies. Developing a hub, we aim to increase our internal capacity, better connect to neighborhoods, make Azerbaijan a destination for international businesses and with this to turn into a value adding hub of the transport chain. Thank you.

Mr Rufat Bayramov

“The role of TRACECA in connecting Europe and Asia”

Although today speaking about Silk Road and connectivity, discussion goes primarily about BRI, the starting point of restoration of the ancient Great Silk Road started in Brussels in 1993 and in 1998 in Baku with participation of state officials of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the rest, the "Basic Multilateral Agreement on International Transport for the Development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Corridor" was signed. Initially TRACECA consisted of six countries, now we have grown and consist of thirteen countries. The main objectives of the initiative is development of economic relations, trade and transport communication in the regions of Europe, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus and Asia; ensuring international transportation of goods and passengers, as well as international transport of hydrocarbons; ensuring traffic security, cargo safety and environmental protection; Ensuring access to the world market of road, air and rail transport, as well as commercial navigation; creation of equal conditions of competition for transport operations.

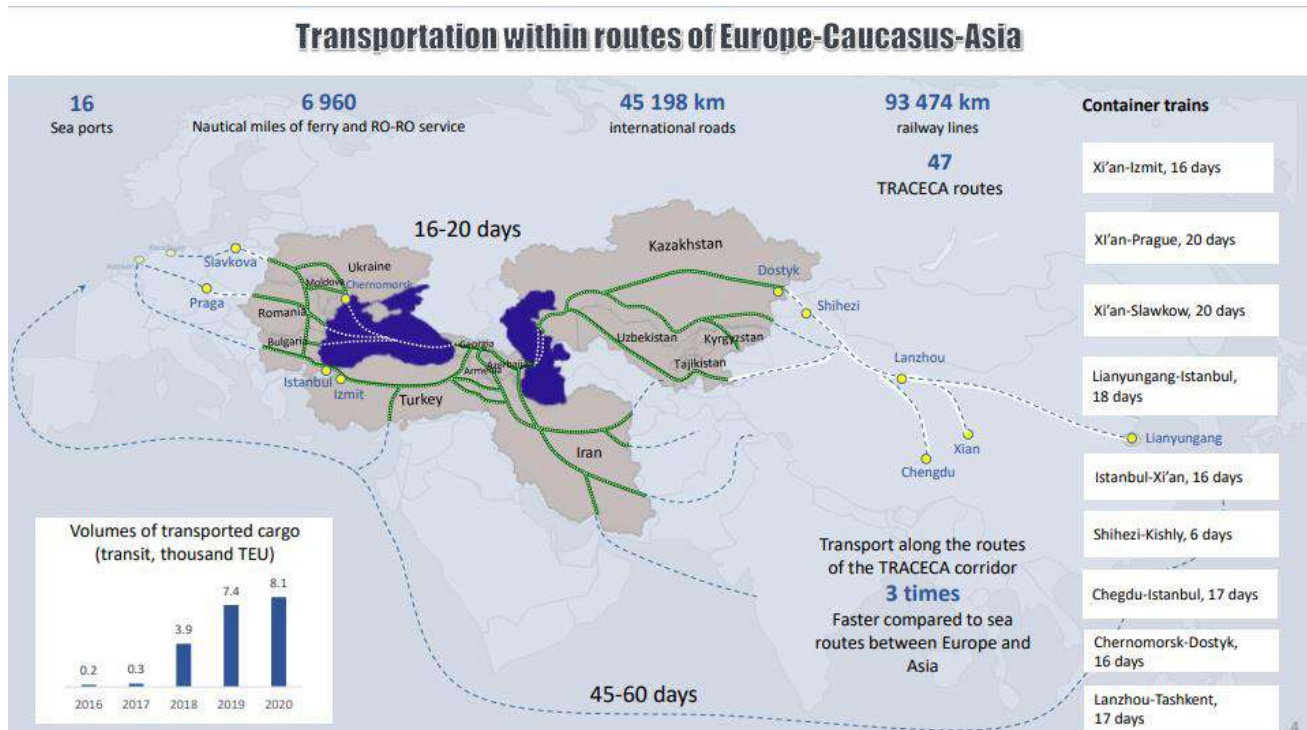


Figure 2

Looking at the current map we can see that the initiative covers all the area between Europe and China including Black Sea, Caucasus, Caspian Sea, Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and other Central Asian countries. TRACECA includes 47 routes, more than 45 000 km of roads, more than 93 000 km of railway roads, 16 seaports. Since 2017 the cargo flow in the corridor has significantly increased and delivery time has three times decreased, at the same time volume of non-oil goods have three time increased.

The EU, within the framework of the TRACECA Program, financed 85 projects out of which 14 were investment, and 71 - technical assistance projects worth more than 187 mln Euro. Many of them include Azerbaijan as well. More than 40% of the project budget was directed to the development of the corridor infrastructure. The implementation of the projects helped to attract investment to the region. IFI investments in TRACECA infrastructure amounted to over 4 billion Euro. In 2016, the implementation of the last EU-TRACECA technical project was completed. Currently the particular focus of the TRACECA is dedicated to:

- (1) digitalization of markets in the countries of Caucasus and Central Asia

- (2) harmonization of markets, e-trade, e-logistics, digital transport corridors and increase of container traffic volumes in the landlocked TRACECA countries
- (3) Optimization of the mechanism of the transport component of export-import operations for SME's

Concept for development of container routes by 2030 considered division of thirty-five Eurasian countries into 8 groups and all commodities traditionally traded between these countries into 10 groups. The total external trade of the European and Asian countries in 2019 was \$133 trln out of which thirty percent belong to China, South Korea and Japan, which means that these three countries generate thirty percent of all external trade of Eurasia. Analysis of main trade partners of TRACECA countries shows that Germany, Italy, China, Russia, and the US are on the top. According to our forecast, in an optimistic scenario by 2030 we will be able to transport more than 760 thousand containers. Concept of the TRACECA digital development is based on development of a platform which combines all stakeholders: government authorities, companies, shippers, personal accounts of carriers in a single window manner, and digital availability of all the documents. Switching online will reduce the impact of human factors on the processes that may affect the shipping, queuing, and resolve issues of bottleneck in infrastructure.

There are a number of international organizations and projects investing in digitalization of the region, such as projects of WTO working with Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kazakhstan assessing infrastructure, mobility, quality of services and readiness for digitalization. There are also processes driven by global companies such as Chinese companies introducing digital solutions.

Another issue we are working on is the development of a legal framework for simplification of border crossing procedures (Single Transit Permit) and various levels of involvement of the countries in the development of digital platforms.

As the last, but not least, I would like to cover TRACECA's potential role in unblocking all communications in the South Caucasus and Zangazur Corridor. TRACECA is the only legal platform where Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia are presented, so this empowers to see ourselves as technical assistants within the process with support of IFI, EU and other donors.

Professor Munira Shahidi

“Intercultural communication in connection the 3B: Brussels, Baku, Beijing”

I'd like to start with my deepest gratitude to the organizers of the highly conceptualized discussion of the problems of connectivity of the globe, bringing three key-places of the EU/UK and China cooperation initiatives for greater connectivity of Eurasia. Especially Nargiz Ismailova for this solid SG of ADA.

I am thankful for the principal coordinator of the project GCRF COMPASS, Professor Elena Korosteleva, for inviting me to talk at the plenary session of that event, entitled: 'Global connectivity agenda and regional priorities.'

Indeed, one of the crucial issues within the connectivity agenda, regarding the issue within the national, regional, and inter-regional collaboration, needs to explore common human/humanity values, which is the core of intercultural resilience. Discussed through the new initiation of ADA on the 3Bs: Brussels, Baku, Beijing, however, it gives a new, concrete images for on-going discussions of Eurasian changing relations. Although through these more than three years of working to-gather within the project COMPASS, connecting the platforms of the 6 universities, we are inspired by the meetings, discussing, and building a new inter-university platform, the new initiation of ADA gives another, newly formed dimension within the activity of COMPASS and its capacity to connect that diversity of the national university programs. Highlighting connectivity of 3B opens new perspectives to improve globe intercultural resilience of International Relations, refreshing, for example, traditionally formed intercultural connectivity of Central Asia -Caucasus, brightly expressed in intercultural activity of Azerbaijan-Tajikistan actors of cultures in 20/21cc. This is development of the common classical Poetics of Azerbaijan and Tajikistan into modern/postmodern arts in Eurasia and the globe. This is the capacity of two cultures to connect two different regions and more.

Two styles of speech and two classes of thought of Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, based on the Persian-speaking poets of Azerbaijan, the most known of whom, Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209), were developing through the last century on re-building that capacity of the past, developing it at present, opening the future of relations in the region and beyond.

The connecting poetics heritage of Azerbaijan has been studied by the known academics of Europe and Asia from the start of the last century, developing it to-day. In the works of E.G. Browne, E.G. Nicholson, Reza Shafaq, Shibli Nu'mani, Zabehullah Safa, E. Bertels, Abdulqani Mirzoev, Jan Ripka, Kh. Mirzo-zoda, Elnor Latif Khasanov, to name, but few, the Azeri Persian-speaking poet's art has been studied, connecting 'yesterday-to-day' holistic vision of the globe. Expressed in dialogical style of talks between man/women cosmic starts, gaining more terrestrial/heaven features of modernity, that Tajik-Turk style of self-expression, along with diversity styles of Poetics, such as Indian style, Khorasan style etc. both known in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan academic schools of arts, are going now through another period of integration into the globe intercultural resilience. Though a comprehensive study of Nizami Ganjavi's heritage, building a common, intercultural, peace-full and creative space in inter-regional relations, CA and Caucasus, CA and Russia/India/Iran/China and, finally, bringing these studies closer to our nowadays discussions: EU/UK & China, challenges a new, innovative vision of intercultural globe development. This challenge in their respond of nowadays cross-cultural researchers is gaining momentum now, within the new period of building cultural diplomacy. One of initiators of this new tendency in comparative intercultural studies is the Institute of Asian and African studies of Moscow State University in cooperation with TNU and other universities of Asia and Europe, going through the complicated period of building new quality of relations with the close neighborhood and beyond.

My experience of working in the borderless space of comparative literary/cultural studies of East and West, forming my professional interest in connection the 3B: Brussel, Baku, Beijing, however, needs for peer support of the partnering universities. In compared to my previous activity in comparative studies, it needs now for more wider geo-political, geo-economic and geo-cultural vision in their interconnection. Gradually gaining that capacity with our visits and trainings at EU Parliament and London office of international relations, I learned even more from non-official contacts, going on the margins of the official trainings and speeches. These new contacts are opening now more human/humanity interactions between European, Russian, CA/Caucasian, Chinese culture/civilizations. Though each of these regions consists of the numerous ethno-religious, institutional, and communal associations, there are basic, generating values, connecting the paradigms of the new relations via actors, organizations, and the state institutions, as well as NGOs. Exploring within the nowadays challenges of the globe, intercultural communication within the 3Bs is opening new perspectives of the globe development, bringing back the frankly, open relations between people, stagnated now in their social relations by the pandemic Corona-19.

Social, face-to-face communication, developing through the interaction of partnership, especially via Poetics and arts, creates more open, healthy, and creative intercultural, international community - not only in creative arts, but political or economic alliances and educational partnerships. These communications were always a moto of Tajik-Azeri relationship and brotherhood.

The regional and inter-regional teams frequently suffer from the intervention from 'above'. That makes the crises of trust and unhealthy ignorance for those, who are not aware about the principles of adaptation, transformation, and development, though they are the crucial instruments to develop regional and inter-regional relations. Our common ancestors, opening perspectives of traditionally inter-regional intercultural communication, were developed within the changing challenges of the time by the previous generations of poets, composers, and artists, closely cooperating with each other. Starting with the friendship of Sadriddin Ayni and Samed Vurgun in Poetics, developed by Kara-Karaev and Ziodullo Shahidi in music, still reflecting in Suhrob Kurbonov and Farhad Khalilov's creative friendship, these studies in their contemporary activity could open new pages of the modern/postmodern development of intercultural, inter-regional, inter-state relations of Eurasia.

Tajikistan is at the start of the great events, bringing to-gather the countries of CIS and SCO. The project GCRF and intercultural communication of the 6 universities, especially bilateral intercultural communication of Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, widening this space into multilateral communication within the 3B and wider, can make a crucial contribution into EU/UK & China cooperation initiatives, connecting them with the nowadays globe challenges.

Panel I: From camels to trains: transportation, technology, and economic connectivity

Foreword by Moderator, Dr Siddharth Saxena

This panel is titled “From camels to trains: transportation, technology and economic connectivity” in a Silk Way very frequently called by Dr Ziyadov as well. We have already learned everything about the times of camels and are looking forward to exploring all the ways of connectivity that can exist. Technology is a hard part of the discussion, full of technical terms. At the same time, we connect as we rebuild transport infrastructure and develop new modes of working, but we are still relying on technology that is approximately seventy years old and that is one of the reasons why we are stuck in the paradigms of energy consumption, manufacturing, carbon footprint and so on. It is time to think about the ways of making a difference in the supply chain and move away from unsustainable modes of working in the future and what can be the role of Caucasus, Central and South Asia that are still not embedded heavily in technology connectivity in that process. Within this conference and this panel, we hope to find answers to these questions.

Husniyye Mammadova

The COVID 19 pandemic, escalation of carries, congestion of have exposed the fragility of global supply chains. And on top of this there is confrontation of European and Chinese companies

Being a landlocked country Azerbaijan tries to fulfill its transit potential by transforming transportation and logistics into one of the key competitive advantages of its economy and to meet demand. Fitting into a diverse and competitive transport system within the region is one of the utmost important issues for Azerbaijan. In this sense the strongest emphasis was given to establishment of infrastructure, establishment of Free Economic Zone.

With this in mind, have been initiated number of mega initiatives in a short period of time such as Baku Tbilisi Kars railway, Baku International Sea Trade Port, an investment friendly and tax-free concept

These projects will lead the country into transforming into a leading transport hub not only of regional importance, enabling industries with solid bases in connecting Europe and Asia. Azerbaijani Chinese relations are very important and provide significant opportunities for Azerbaijan.

In the meantime, it is important to consider the development of regional synergy. Azerbaijan continues to work on diversification and modernization of its regional infrastructure, trans Eurasian railway networks, importance of digitalization of trade, interested in acquainting hard and soft infrastructure within the framework of regional organizations such as GUAM, and development within its GUAM-NET Platform; supporting development of digital platform within OSCE that will enhance connectivity within Caspian Sea region, make energy security strong and compliment digitization projects carried out on bilateral level.

Last year Azerbaijan ended occupation lasting for nearly thirty years of 20% of its territory lasting for almost 30 years. Now, in a post war period, it is time to set a new concept and vision of regional development and cooperation. This requires international cooperation and protection of companies engaged. Using the format and opportunities given by this conference I will zoom in into the topic of regional cooperation and the role of transport. Currently we are in the process of reconstruction and bringing new perspectives to geopolitics. The process should be reinforced through first, normalization of information exchange between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Opening up communications within the region is part of trilateral agreement (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia) and implementation of this agreement will change the landscape of politics in the region along with connecting Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan, new speedy railway will connect Azerbaijan with Turkey through Zangazur corridor. This connection will enhance regional cooperation and trade, change the landscape of regional connectivity, and reinforce peace building and reinforce a prosperous future. The emergence of a transport hub in the Karabakh region will strengthen the position of the entire South Caucasus. It will not only

expand the network of transport corridors but will also positively impact regional cooperation strengthening trans Eurasian transport networks such as the Middle Corridor and the international North South Transport Corridor. And this is how the administration is changing political and geopolitical realities of the region ending the war. Already has started reconstruction of railway in Nakhichevan, a landlocked Autonomous Republic, which will be connected to the rest of the country through transportation Hub in Zangilan region. This transport network will also split Middle corridor into the North and South Middle corridor. An airport will be in neighboring Fizuli. Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Russia are continuing negotiations on reconstruction of the Armenian sector of the railway. Once the communications are restored it will be possible to achieve the Persian Gulf and Russia via Azerbaijan, China and the EU will be connected, China-Turkey and Turkey-Central Asia trade will be in benefit. With all these initiatives and efforts in strengthening inter-continental connectivity, Azerbaijan will become the true hub connecting all its partners and increase its strategic importance as a transport hub. The increasing cooperation in the field of transport connectivity between EU and Azerbaijan was unveiled in EU's joint communication on "Connecting Europe and Asia", in which EU pledged to develop transport networks with Asia and promotion of transport linkages to and between its Eastern Partners. Thus, strengthening EU-Azerbaijan relations is the way for the EU to achieve its overarching objectives. Also, it will boost regional cooperation and significantly reduce the risk of military conflicts, this compliments EU's policy for more stable and secure Neighborhood. China includes Azerbaijan in its grand plans on connecting East with West, and this is not only due to Azerbaijan's advantageous geographical position. Azerbaijan has built its reputation of being open for businesses and is rated as 38 among free economies in the world with a safe commercial environment. Developing Azerbaijani-Chinese relations are among fundamentally important directions of Azerbaijani foreign policy.

In conclusion, I would like to underline those initiatives that we bring forward, connecting countries for the shared prosperous future, are in our interest and show capacity to expand and deepen regional cooperation.

I want to thank everyone for attention and finalize here.

Aida Badalova

“East-West transit corridor: challenges to Azerbaijan’s transit potential”

Honorable speakers have already broadly discussed the topic of transition from camels to trains, so I will take an opportunity to talk about challenges faced by transportation transit corridors development along the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative). Talking about the BRI initiative, I should mention that nowadays transportation and digital connectivity are the main issues that complement each other and allow people around the world to change ideas and knowledge, through physical or virtual interaction as we have here now. Without efficient connection between primary transmission of information and transportation of goods are impossible. And such linkage creates the need for creation of a reliable and sustainable supply chain. Belt and Road Initiative established in 2013 aims at reintegration, linkage, and connection, has potential to contribute to long term development of supply chain and economies along the corridor. In 2020 China outpaced the US and became the EU’s biggest trade partner. I will bring an example of some numbers from Eurostat: trade between China and the EU was worth seven hundred nine billion compared with six hundred seventy-one billion worth of export and import with the US. China has also become the central gravitational center for the Central Asian “corridor” countries and for Azerbaijan, therefore for all the countries interested in development of trade and investment. Relations with China for Azerbaijan are very important point, since they are considered to allow deliver goods to wider markets and provide better access to markets.

But this development comes with some challenges and certain expenses. Gains from BRI are unevenly distributed between the regions and countries. Some countries, particularly small countries like ourselves and landlocked countries, remain largely outside of global trade processes. The total investment in transport infrastructure estimated to be hundred forty-four billion in seventy “corridor” economies. However, the trade and investment among the “corridor” countries are aiming to absorb and generate value creation. Over the past few years Azerbaijan has invested billions of dollars in the transport infrastructure. Thanks to this, Azerbaijan is now ranked 7th worldwide for the quality of roads, 11th for the efficiency of the railway services and 12th for the efficiency of transport services. These are rankings mentioned by the World Economic Forum. In October 2017 Baku Tbilisi Kars railway started its operation connecting trans-European and trans-Asian railway networks. With a capacity of 6.5 million tons of cargo per year, the railway makes it possible to reduce the transit time between China and Southeastern Europe by 70% (10-20 days). In May 2018 the first stage of construction of the International Sea Port was completed. Its annual cargo capacity is around 15 million tons per year with hundred thousand containers. Moreover, with over six hundred sixty vessels at its disposal Azerbaijan is also one of the largest commercial fleets on the Caspian Sea. The country has put a lot of effort into building necessary infrastructure for becoming a logistical and transport hub and the process continues.

However, the development of infrastructure curse in the increase of public costs. Belt and Road Initiative transport projects can expand trade and increase foreign investment by lowering trade costs. That is what we believe in, but sometimes the cost of construction of new infrastructure outweighs the gains. Considerable foreign investments that were a handful for “corridor” economies (more than 10 billion dollars in 2017) have been made to the number of countries among which were countries of Central Asia. But again I should mention that even FDIs were unevenly distributed and Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan were the countries that have received the smallest portion of FDI among all the recipients of BRI investments.

To support and boost competitiveness of the Middle Corridor, Chinese subsidies have been used for train traffic. The subsidies initially aimed at ensuring the stability, improving competitiveness and regular operation of train lines connecting China to Europe. Although in the last two years China has been scaling down its subsidies from 50% of the trade cost in 2018 to 30% in 2020 both in direct and indirect subsidies for operators as well as local railroad companies. Azerbaijan Railroads haven’t received any BRI subsidies

The other challenge for the “corridor” economies is the fact that corridor economies are less integrated compared to, for example, East Asian countries. Infrastructure and policy gap are among main obstacles for foreign policy trade. These transport corridors are not only for infrastructure projects, but they are also for promotion of free trade, technology and innovation exchange and establishment of partnerships along the corridor. In this sense we call to our partners from different platforms including the private sector to fully employ the potential of the Corridor. Talking about the actions needed there should be structural reforms. Many countries have trade policies and border management systems to create varying obstacles for the cross-border trade. Making it easier to export and import goods is essential for countries to reach an efficient transition process. All “corridor” economies at least on the regional level would benefit from the open procurement processes for efficient operation of enterprises because in many countries the main players, such as the railroads, shipping companies are state owned enterprises. Secondly, they should prioritize cooperation in aligning trade import and export. For our country to benefit fully from the project, the “corridor” economies need to work together to improve trade facilitation and border management, agree on legal stands and attract FDIs, deal with transit tariffs and other policy issues. I would like to give an example: delivery of goods from China to Europe along the East West corridor through Azerbaijan has been completed in twelve days. Although the launch of the East-West Corridor was linked to the TRACECA Program (1993), in 2015 Azerbaijan together with its partners in Central Asia gave new life to the corridor through the Trans Caspian International Transport Corridor. The Corridor currently starts in China. In 2020 this Corridor, despite all the difficulties associated with COVID pandemic, was able to carry through trade ships 8.4 million cargo, while the corridor was not working on its full capacity. Achieving its full potential of the transit corridor will depend on the establishment of a sustainable, forward and backward value chain with participation of all the countries along the corridor.

So, I would highlight the sensitivity of landlocked countries to cross-border restrictions and the need for extra action to ensure sustainability of international trade and transport corridors. Pandemic has greatly demonstrated the importance of regional cooperation and the post-pandemic era necessitates further regional cooperation, region integration mechanisms development. Here we are thinking of taking actions on a deeper level of inter-regional cooperation along the transit corridors’ economies.

Syed Shakeel Shah

Today I will focus on two things, the first will be about CAREC Strategy on Connectivity and introduction to the program itself and the second about Smart Connectivity and how digitization will be the key enabler.

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program is a partnership of 11 countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the People's Republic of China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). It was started by the Asian Development Bank as a lead partner and it was joined by six development partners working together to promote development through cooperation, leading to accelerated economic growth and poverty reduction. The initial aim of the program was development of infrastructure, and it was guided by the vision of "Good Neighbors, Good Partners, and Good Prospects."

With the rapid economic expansion of the People's Republic of China and Japan to the east, the Russian Federation to the north, and India and Pakistan to the south, there is a real and growing demand for improved connections between Europe and Asia. This momentum provides CAREC countries with an unprecedented opportunity to emerge as a center for trade and commerce, to achieve higher levels of economic growth, and to reduce poverty. Turning this potential into reality will require significant improvement in the region's physical infrastructure such as roads, aviation and rail systems; in the way the region manages its shared resources to support efficient and rational use of energy and water; in progress toward harmonizing and modernizing its customs administrations, and streamlining the rules and procedures that govern countries' international trade relationships; and in efforts to promote and strengthen people-to-people contacts across borders. The six CAREC transport corridors are building a truly global future for the region, linking markets in northern People's Republic of China to Azerbaijan in the Caucasus and further to Europe, and from Kazakhstan to Pakistan's warm-water ports of Karachi, Gwadar, and beyond. Seamless connectivity is moving people and their businesses along the CAREC corridors faster, speeding up passage, and reducing the costs of crossing borders. CAREC corridors improve access to essential services and job opportunities – ultimately ensuring a better quality of life for all people of the CAREC region.

CAREC program overviews quality and performance of these six corridors through its Corridor performance monitor and measurement instrument. On the border crossing points being measured time of passing of goods which is an important point for measuring efficiency of corridors for handling international trade. Now the new concept of CAREC Program goes beyond the corridors and has six clusters of activity: Economic and Financial Stability; Trade, Tourism, and Economic Corridors; Infrastructure and Connectivity; Agriculture and Water; Human Development.

Now coming to the point of Smart Connectivity, I believe that digitalization will be the key enabler. The overall vision of Smart Connectivity is to expand digital components across key infrastructure, which will in turn support efficiency of infrastructure projects and new business models and technologies. It is about making investments in sectors like energy and transport that are future proof. The aim of Smart Connectivity is to establish a growth platform for innovative services and to support economic growth based on innovation. This could ultimately lead, for example, to the automatization of road transport. Countries can leverage ICT for smart connectivity covering road, rail, inland waterway, and intermodal transport.

The aim of smart connectivity and digital interventions in trade regulation include development of innovative platforms. Digitalization must be an overarching theme and it will lead to a paperless trading environment that will allow the complete and transparent capture of reliable trade data, enabling administrations to take informed decisions; increased transparency; lower costs and increased revenue for both the private sector and Governments. One single ICT platform will make regional integration easier in a flawless manner.

Developments in Azerbaijan and neighboring Georgia and the flow of investment we have seen up to today are examples of multimodal linkages connecting Caspian with rail and/or road transport and connecting to Turkey and Europe. This vision Azerbaijan is pushing forward and it fits long term dreams of a transport corridor between Asia with Europe. At CAREC institute we see that Azerbaijan Georgia and Turkey are ready for modernization for their border crossing points and they are bringing to the table bilateral agreements that can be developed into Smart border crossing points (BCPs). These facilitations will reduce the cost of goods transportation.

There are multiple initiatives connecting Eurasia and Azerbaijan's national policy copying all initiatives such as TRASECA, CAREC Corridors, BRI Initiative. The main need is to achieve overarching agreement between stakeholders that were developing these corridors.

Dr Olga Malashenkova

“The Economic Dimension of Innovative Development in Central and South Asia”

Today I would like to present the results of scientific research. Some questions that I want to share with you are “How to economically measure innovative development? How is Azerbaijan dealing with its innovative development goals? What is the role of the EU/UK and China in this process?”. All the discussion can be generalized under the question “How do we economically measure development?”. To answer these questions, I propose three points or understandings:

1. Globally recognized rankings
2. Specific ecosystem rankings from research companies
3. Results on one international project on Eastern Partnership countries “EU4Digital” where I personally have participated.

Here I would like to show you figures on innovative development and venture capital infrastructure and then I will move to my results on Azerbaijan.

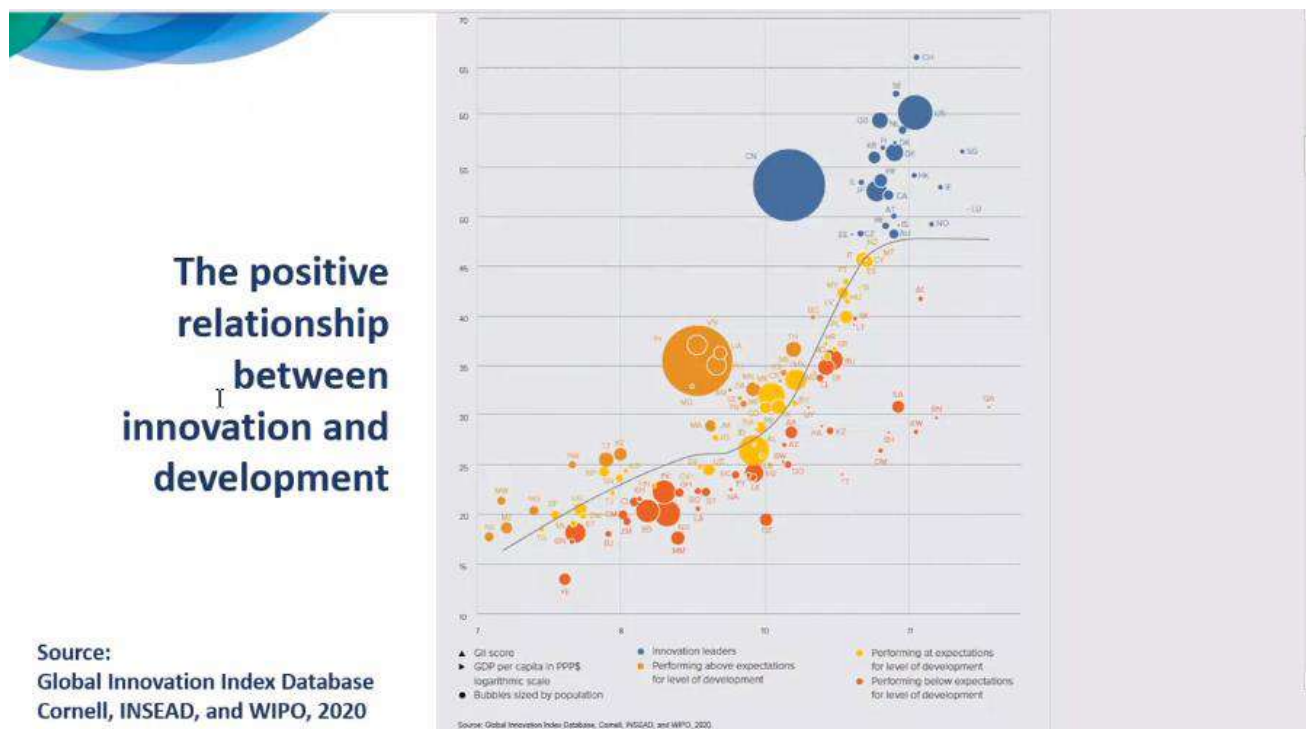


Figure 3

On my slide (Figure 3) you can see that all economies are covered in the global innovation index 2020. Economies with high innovative element are located close to the trendline. In contrast, economies located below the trendline are the ones with lower innovative performance.

Top 10 countries as well as Azerbaijan and Belarus are included in my next slide (Figure 4), and as you can see these two countries are not ranked high in the Global Innovation Index Ranking. Also, I want to share with some more rankings on innovative development, for example Bloomberg innovation index ranking of 2015 when the last research was conducted. I have investigated the connection between innovation development and venture capital development also and the ecosystem. So, I have started to research

global start-up system rankings in the world. And the results were matching with rankings shown on the previous slide (Figure 3).



Figure 4

Another research conducted by Startup Blink has given us very similar results. We can see quite developed economies such as the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, and China on top of the list. The very similar results are true for cities' ranking by Startup Blink, where London, Beijing, Berlin, Shanghai, Paris, Amsterdam are into the top twenty of the lists. Also, I have found out additional data on Azerbaijan on Startup Blink. (See Figure 5) But I should mention that according to my research on the country conducted within EU funded project "EU4Digital" I should say that the most updated numbers are much higher. According to Startup Blink, Startup ecosystem of Baku is ranked 455 in global ranking, 43rd in regional ranking (Eastern Europe) and number 1 across the country. Marketing and Sales is the most popular industry among existing startups, top industries also include software and data and fintech.

Conducting EU4Digital project, I have found out that general legal framework for investments, business ventures and angel investments are quite good and developed. Number of taxes and VAT exception regulations exist on income taxes for SMEs. Concerning R&D and IPR regulations, I would say it is not yet properly established and from my point of view is big challenge for the country now.

My conclusions and recommendations for development of Startup ecosystem in Azerbaijan are as follows. The past decade was time of development for the country, but there are lots of challenges such as nurturing tech talents, regional integration by providing favorable legal framework including a more flexible visa regime, better access to finance and so on. Also, I would like to propose that Energy, FinTech, Education and Tourism are industries with high levels of potential for development in the country.

I would like to finalize with phrase of venture capitalist Jim Breyer who was asked how countries can build their own Silicon Valleys, and his answer was "That's magic. It is not possible to make it if there is no love for entrepreneurship and experimentation".

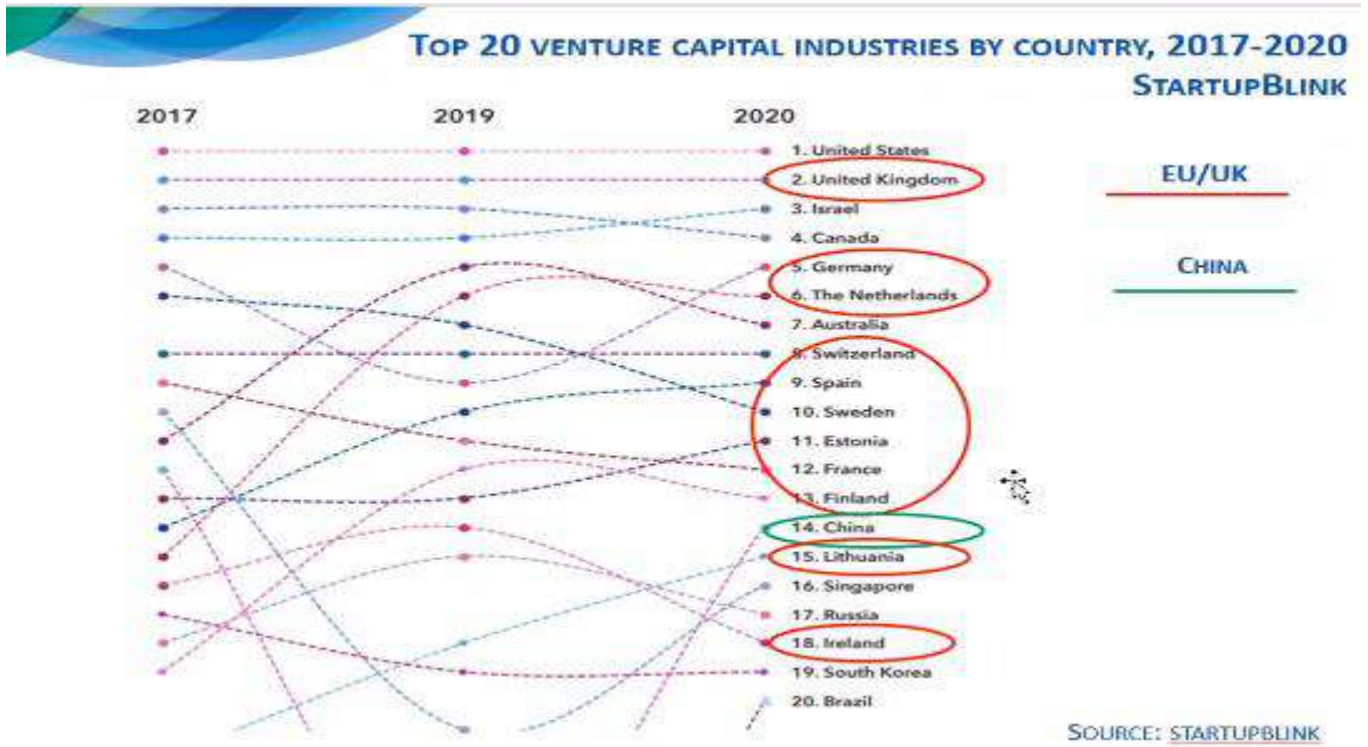


Figure 5

Prof. Gulshan Sachdeva

That was very much enriching to hear so many different points of view on the topic. I will try to look at all connecting things that are happening from an Indian perspective and my personal views since I have been following the topic for quite some time by now. If we look at Eurasian economic architecture now. I think that every important country in the region has its own connectivity projects and aspirations either bilateral or perhaps within multicountry frameworks. In the last two years Chinese BRI project has dominated the discussions over the last two years, but in fact there are also many other projects in the region that are on different status of implementation. In the previous session we have heard about TRACECA as well as Transport Corridor that was established in early 90th, also some time before having been conducted a lot of talks about US Silk Road strategy. Russian Eurasian Economic Union for greater Eurasian partnership. And of course, for the last two years we have Eurasian Connectivity strategy and this week G7 has come up with a B3W program and I also would like to mention the American Blue Dot Network.

I want to highlight that many of these plans are either about Eurasian connectivity or broadly linking Europe to Asia for Eurasia. In addition to these great plans, there are countries like Japan, South Korea, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and many others. They have their own connectivity plans. While looking at all these plans it becomes quite clear that the current phase of globalization in Asia and in Eurasia are being defined by geo-economics and geo-politics of these connectivity projects. Within all these projects India is also trying to build its own connectivity narrative. This narrative is being defined by signing a big number of strategic partnerships signed with many countries, I would with almost every important country in this world. And particularly between 2005 and 2015 different types of trade agreements have been signed. These around 25 strategic partnership documents have been signed traditionally with Russia first, and then with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, etc. I am not going to go into detail into how the Soviet Union and India used to be the number one trading partner. But during the last thirty years even the politics are very weak, but the commercial component is almost missing. Along with this, India is also putting together its own cooperation development engagements because India has also become a reasonably important player in the region and then the last twenty years policies India has announced. “Look East Policy” and the latest “Act East Policy”, “Connect Central Asia” policy since 2012, and certain initiatives within South Asia and within the Indian ocean region, Indian African dialogue and other engagements in Africa, Afghanistan, West Asian region. If we put together these policies and initiatives and we link them to the international North-South Corridor, with the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor and then with the SAGE initiative of India which is a project aiming to digitize India. Putting all these together may not look like such a big plan as the BRI, but you may develop certain narratives from these. Initially Indian connectivity design within Eurasia it aligns with Russia and Central Asian countries. Due to difficult India-Pakistan relations and instability in Afghanistan, India has started working with Iran which is along with Russia a very important part of North-South Corridor and India started investing in Chabahar port. On the other hand, Indian-US relations are becoming closer, particularly in the last 15 years. This makes the situation complicated. The US has supported India’s North-South Project and I believe initially the concept was very sound but now Americans will never put money behind this project.

Despite having all the difficult relations between India-Pakistan, Pakistan-Afghanistan and all these issues, most of the countries have with kind of agreement which was needed but still money was not there. That is why we are still stuck where we were. For any connectivity designs for Indian Eurasia projects, Iran have become important, but America’s obsession with Iran have created many difficulties to implementation of these programs. At the same time, BRI has created certain complications mainly because of sovereignty related issues within China-Pakistan economic corridor and Chinese plans in the Indian ocean. Officially have been raised objection to CEPS and was absent at BRI 1 and BRI 2 Forums. But if we look at debated beyond of initial narratives, during the last couple of years, many have argued for certain selective participation at the BRI project particularly in the Eurasian region. But right now, I believe that all these discussions across BRI have gone into background and there are in fact more discussions on how to decouple from Chinese economy.

Within this context of assertive China, I think that other kind of connectivity partnerships are being reached. We have an earlier Japan-Indian partnership in terms of Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, then seven EU leaders' meeting with the Indian Prime Minister established the EU-India connectivity partnership. I believe India would like to join B3W connectivity plan of G7 leaders.

To conclude I would like to bring several points. First, all these plans we have discussed, plans of different scales, large ones and small ones, projects of multilateral organizations such as ADB or World Bank, they all tackle large developmental issues but also geopolitics. And my feeling is that in the last couple of years there is too much emphasis on geopolitics. Geopolitics are important, but I believe that economic feasibility will determine the future of these projects. I believe that complementarity of these plans is the ultimate ending of all these different plans to ensure economic profitability. For example, if a port built within the China-Pakistan corridor will not be open to the Indian market, in the long run it will not survive, and investments will reduce. The second point is that COVID 19 pandemic has already disrupted the whole global economy and we still do not know what kind of world will be a covid world and what will be the process of recovery. This will be depending on resources that will contribute to these grand plans of recovery, what kind of infrastructure requirements. So, till the time we have clarity on these issues, I think the geopolitical will dominate in this sphere's narrative as at the G7 recent meeting. Also, I believe the topic of connectivity is going to be more and more trendy in the coming years. As already mentioned, the emphasis of most of these projects is on manufacturing and hard infrastructure as many of the countries in this region still have a deficit of hard infrastructure. But if one is looking slightly ahead, many Asian countries may today desire hard infrastructure, but over time they will follow western model and rely more on soft infrastructure and technology, connectivity, tourism, and people to people spheres. But of course, for this development to happen we first should be physically connected to each other.

Panel II: Energy security & green connectivity, through the start-up lens

Foreword by Moderator, Akhmed Gumbatov

Good afternoon, everyone. It is my pleasure to be today's moderator of this panel on "Energy security and green connectivity through the startup lens". I want to start without delay and pass the floor to the first speaker of the panel, Mr Ismailzade.

Fariz Ismailzade

First of all, I want to share my appreciation to organizers of this very timely and rich in discussions Conference. Yesterday and today very important topics regarding connectivity corridors, energy issues associated with them and geopolitics, and most importantly how Azerbaijan is becoming a real hub for the region in many aspects. We have such great guests at the panel such as SOCAR Vice President Mr Elshad Nasirov, Deputy Minister of Energy Mr Elnur Soltanov, Mr Valeh Alasgarov. With my speech I want to throw to the audience some questions for discussion and thought. The first question is about what kind of interesting projects are to be expected to be realized in Karabakh when it comes to energy issues. Perhaps this could be discussed throughout the current panel and be addressed by each panelist. I know that Karabakh has been announced to be a "green zone" by President Aliyev and his focus is the development of smart villages and cities. We have also heard about a contract with BP on provision of renewable energy to the region. So, I would like to emphasize this topic lot and whether this region will see a project as big as the 90th in Azerbaijan. The other focus issues I would like to raise a new agreement with Turkmenistan and how changes the dynamics of Caspian Basin. Actually, nobody has expected that agreement to come and the legal status of the Caspian Sea to be agreed. So in view of these two recent developments, I like to propose discussion of the topic of upcoming changes in the Caspian Region and whether there are more opportunities for collaboration. With Central Asian countries and for cross Caspian energy infrastructure development. The third issue I would like to raise, is the topic of renewables generally and in Azerbaijan, what are trends and opportunities for oil country in this sphere. With the latest agreements signed between the government of Azerbaijan and global companies on renewables, this direction can become a backbone of the economy of Azerbaijan in the future. I believe that these issues should become an important pillar of today's discussion.

Last but not least, I would like to discuss the impact of the Southern Gas Corridor, which has been completed very recently. The SGC will definitely affect the regional energy infrastructure, policy and foreign policy of Azerbaijan and countries of our closest neighborhood.

Dr Elnur Soltanov

I would like to express an honour to join these provocative topics raised by the conference and discussions within it. Regarding connectivity of carbons, I wouldn't concentrate much on Oil and Gas since Mr Nasirov is speaking next after me. In Northern, Southern and Western directions, there are big regional and international connectivity projects taking place in the field of hydrocarbons. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the power sector in the region. There is some work being done regarding this in cooperation with Georgia, but as you know in the power sector interconnection is even more important. In the power sector there is the word "balance" and it matters a lot. Balance means that electricity cannot be stored and therefore consumption and production of electricity should be equal to each other. If not, we face a lot of troubles and therefore blackouts happen, when we cannot control the balance and the system becomes out of order. Spaces such as Europe are very important because there is a lot of interconnectivities and that helps with resilience. This is even more important in the age of renewable energy, because with traditional energy the basics are having an engine, gas pedal and you are in control of balance. But regarding wind and solar, the two main pillars of renewable energy, there is a cliché phrase such as "the wind does not blow all the time, and the sun does not shine all the time". There is a discrepancy between when you have them and when you need them, and this means that you have to work much harder on system balance especially when renewable energy production goes beyond 20% of existing production. That is very hard to maintain unless you have a state-of-the-art system to regulate potential blackouts. When you are interconnected with your neighbors the power balance is being managed by international regulations. When you do not have internal power, you can get help from the outside world. We are doing well in this sphere here, in the Caucasus. We have some limited connection to Russia, we are not connected to Iran because of different frequencies in the system. Although we export and have some relationship with Iran, it works in the so-called island regime, so it does not increase the percentage of our system's stability. Our connection to Georgia is fine but the Georgian power system is not big enough to help Azerbaijan in case of blackout. So, my belief is that we have to work more on the issue of interconnectivity and although some work is being done in this sphere, what is totally non-existing, is connection through the Caspian Sea. In the sphere of regional connectivity is the electricity power system, Caspian Sea becomes a barrier. Work is being done between Iran Russia and Azerbaijan, Georgia is working with World Bank to build some interconnection between Romania and Georgia, and I believe that Azerbaijan and Armenia as regional countries could become part of this process. So, this is the sphere of connectivity we have to work more especially if there are plans to move toward renewable energy, because otherwise the cost of renewable energy will become even higher. Currently, renewable energy has a hard time to replace the traditional energy especially in countries rich in traditional energy resources and helping the population with prices of electricity and other energy sources. Add to that system stability issues that we have to manage internally without external help of interconnection. Then basically the economic cost of renewable energy goes upwards.

I also would like to touch upon Karabakh issue as it is such an important part of daily agenda in Azerbaijan. Mr President has declared his intention and vision of Karabakh as a green energy zone and this is an order for us. We are already working with Japanese company TEPCO to prepare a massive plan for Karabakh and have signed an implementation agreement with BP on assessment and construction of 240MW solar power plant in Zangilan and Jabrail region. Also, we are working on two 140 MW hydro power stations on the Aras River. In general hydro potential in Karabakh is very high. Our intention is to bring investors to the regions and rely less on governmental budget on energy projects and instead to develop private public partnerships, when investors assess their risks and the government purchases their products for some years, usually for 20 years. We are assessing the possibility of supplying Karabakh with totally only green energy and upcoming results will show us whether this is possible or not. We believe that the available renewable energy resources in Karabakh are above needed. During the Soviet time only around 80 MW was needed to fulfill the entire Karabakh with electricity. Right now, one of our projects aims at 240 MW and other hydro projects aims to produce above another 100 MW. This energy should be enough to supply the entire region with renewable energy as well as citizens of Armenia living in the region with reliable energy and green power. All these

projects in Karabakh are important for Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan which lies out of all mainland grid systems and makes the power system unsustainable. Thus, Zangazur connection that we all are looking for will boost regional resilience connecting Nakhichevan to the mainland.

I also want to share with the audience great news that we have started assessing and rediscovering Caspian as an energy resource and this time as a source of green energy. We assess that in offshore Azerbaijani part of the Sea the power potential is 157 000 MW. Compared to the current installed energy capacity in Azerbaijan, which is 7.5 thousand MW, we have 20 times more energy in offshore Caspian. Right now, this energy is more expensive, but technology innovation will make these energy resources more accessible in the upcoming years. We are looking to build an international consortium to explore these untapped energy resources.

I will stop here and ready to answer your questions at the question-answer session.

Elshad Nasirov

Starting my speech today, I want to agree with Dr Soltanov that the topic is provocative for oil and gas companies. We understand that renewables and hydrogens is a popular topic. Today hydrogens are the second most popular after Covid pandemic. For instance, at the recent St Petersburg economic forum all the energy companies were discussing hydrogens. I also agree with Dr Soltanov that there are a lot of open questions regarding use, transportation, and storage of hydrogens. At the same time, we have to stick to the main topic which is energy security which is equal to national security. As an Oil and Gas company, SOCAR together with ACG (Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli) and Shah Deniz has successfully completed construction of the Southern Gas Corridor. On the 31 of December the first gas reached the EU, particularly Italy. This was a success that happened despite all the troubles created in regional politics. Today Azerbaijani gas reached not only Italy but also Switzerland and other countries to the North of Italy such as Greece, Bulgaria, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey, Georgia. This makes Azerbaijan a provider of energy security to these countries. Today financial institutions are considering financing energy and hydrocarbon projects. All projects of SOCAR, ASG and Shah Deniz are aimed at provision of energy security to Azerbaijan and hydrocarbons consuming countries. Azerbaijan is the land of establishment of hydrocarbon civilization that started with the first industrial revolution in Azerbaijan in 1847. I don't believe that anytime hydrocarbon civilization will be fully replaced and come to an end since gas is a more environmentally friendly source of energy than fuel, coal. And for example, the natural gas that is being delivered to Puglia (Italy) has a potential to completely transform and reshape the environmental situation in the region, since the energy and metal plants in that region are still driven by coal. At the same time as an Oil and Gas company we are considering production of hydrogens in bigger quantities. Currently we are producing it in the quantity required to meet our internal needs. Current plan is to blend hydrogen with the natural gas in the pipelines. Questions to be yet answered in this plan are what hydrogen is blending qualities, how much hydrogen can be blended and who are the customers of the blended natural gas, what are limitations of this process, what are the technical considerations for repurposing already existing natural gas infrastructure to hydrogen infrastructure. Any oil and gas company should ask itself all these questions in order to go through the process of becoming greener. At the same time, it is not an axiom that energy companies will produce renewable energy better than others. So, our specialization is production of hydrocarbon energy, at the same time making the production process greener makes any oil and gas company better fitting to the current trends and environment in the industry.

As a result of the Karabakh war and liberation of lands, we have provided a better and safer energy security to Europe as well. Because in 15-17 kms in the border to Armenia all our infrastructure was under attack threat. Another important milestone is that with the completion of the southern gas corridor we can see higher interest for cooperation among gas producers in Turkmenistan and more readiness to collaborate with western gas suppliers. We are working closely with our Turkmenistan colleagues, going beyond collaboration within "Dostlug" field considering transportation of Turkmen gas across the Caspian and delivering it to the final customers within the European Union. Thank you for your attention.

Valeh Aleskerov

I was appointed as chairman of the Alat Free Economic Zone with the presidential degree as of May 22nd, 2020. Within my presentation I want to share with you about the strategic intent of development of the Free Economic Zone, the type of investors we are trying to attract, what kind of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives we will provide to our clients and economic benefits that will flow to our clients and country. The President's vision has put the country on the road of a more internationally competitive economy, competitive partnerships within international economic relations, establishment of a world class attractive business environment with modern energy, transportation and logistical infrastructure, becoming a diversified and export-oriented economy creating a high added-value. Alat Free Economic Zone Authority has a central place in transforming this vision into reality. We aim to deliver a world class place to do business within this strategic geographic location of the Port of Baku. This strategic geographic location will serve as a regional investment hub and boost competitiveness in the Europe, Asia, North South Corridor, Caucasus. At the same time, we will create and boost sustainable regional advantage based on the regulatory, operating and business environment that investors are looking for. Most important is our investor-centric mindset and approach. We will identify and address investors in a way that will add value for businesses established at Alyat Free Economic Zone (AFEZ). This means that Alat Free Economic Zone (AFEZ) will serve the needs of foreign and national investors who will engage in high value - added and export - oriented manufacturing and services, generate additional value to the economy of Azerbaijan in non - oil sectors of economy, engage in internationally traded activities using innovative technologies and approaches to work. To ensure this vision is brought to reality the President of Azerbaijan has given full backing to the AFEZ authority to develop it into a full-scale international investment hub. Few words about the legal basis of the AFEZ I would like to add. The legal framework for the operation, development, and governance of AFEZ is based on "The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the AFEZ" adopted by the parliament and approved by the President as a prevailing law of the Republic of Azerbaijan and internal regulations of AFEZ developed and adopted by the AFEZ authority. These internal regulations together with AFEZ law create the AFEZ legislation and AFEZ legislation takes precedence over base economy laws. In particular changes have been made and adopted by the Parliament of the Republic in tax, costumes, licensing, and etc.



Figure 6

Target clients and investors we are trying to reach are mainly businesses engaged in high value-added and export-oriented manufacturing and services, internationally traded activities, using innovative technologies and management experience. Core clients will be located within AFEZ and eligible for incentives. Other targeted clients include service providers with a local market focus providing essential commercial, retail, and other services to AFEZ core clients. Ancillary clients will be allowed to locate in defined spaces within AFEZ boundaries, but they are not eligible for incentives. Support clients are businesses with a domestic market focus providing sub-supply products and services to our core clients, who will be allowed to locate in a specially designated support services area adjacent to AFEZ and not eligible for incentives.

Benefits for our core clients will include a package of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives. For example, one of the key benefits is the absence of any taxes on a business. Core clients will not be required to pay Core Clients are not required to pay Value Added Tax, Withholding tax, or any other corporate tax. Import by Core Clients of any products and services from a foreign country, and export by Core Clients of any products and services to a foreign country are exempted from customs duties and taxes. No personal income tax, social security payments and other similar taxes and payments for foreign skilled personnel, no restrictions on foreign ownership, no requirement for a local partner, international standard independent dispute resolution, availability of local skilled personnel, industrial training center, full protection of intellectual property rights, independent regulatory authority etc. are other benefits prepared for our core clients. Number of this incentives will also be available to support clients as well. We believe that success of the Alat project will depend on attraction of investors and a consistent program of engagement in proper care after clients of the AFEZ. In general, fiscal, and non-fiscal incentives, trade facilitation measures, and business-friendly environment will provide our clients/companies with global competitiveness in this strategic location for serving regional and international markets. Additionally, we will provide clients with industrial land sites with ready to use off site infrastructure and utilities.

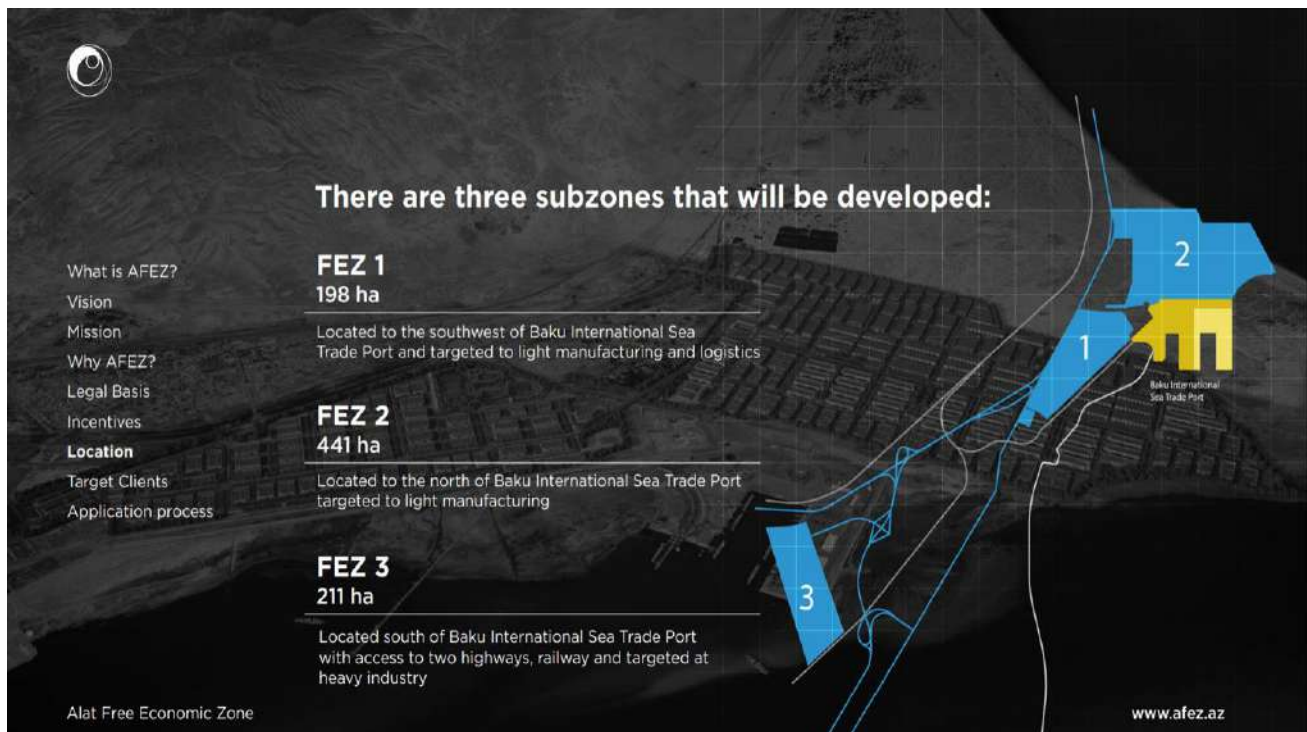


Figure 7

Initially FEZ occupied territory of 198 hundred hectares located at the promises of the Port of Baku. The development measures being implemented by Alat Free Economic Zone authority is to develop the FEZ in

phases. The first phase of development has already been completed and now we are undergoing construction of more 60 hectares of territory adjacent to the highway, railway and Port of Baku. When completed these works, AFEZ will include the following components: the Customs Plaza, serving as main entrance to AFEZ, the AFEZ authority building, one-stop shop business center for investors, Advance Office Accommodation for investors Advance Office Accommodation for the customs officers, ready-to-use industrial land plots, and utility services center. The Physical Development program is on schedule, and we are planning to finish this phase of infrastructure development in July 2022.



Figure 8

Dr Lifan Li

I am studying certain issues regarding China and Azerbaijan working together and its future development. Especially I focus on the Belt and Road Initiative. But I don't think this panel is suitable to share my work because the topic that has been raised here is more focused on energy issues. Today I want to focus on energy issues and expand discussion to China-Azerbaijan relationship: how they work together and what are future steps.

China and Azerbaijan have a profound friendship and established historic relations. The political relationship between the two countries is very stable. I believe frequent communication between heads of state takes place. For example, the recent phone call between heads of the states took place on the evening of June 2nd. China is interested in more exports of Azerbaijani products and promotes Chinese enterprises to invest into this country. I want to give an overview about economic and political cooperation between these two nations. China is the fourth largest trading partner with Azerbaijan, and the volume of trade needs to be increased. From January to November 2020 1.2 billion dollars was the volume of the trade between China and Azerbaijan. Compared to last year, this number decreased to 16%. Azerbaijan's biggest trading partners are Italy, Turkey, Russia and then China. The Chinese part equates to around 7% of the total trade figures for Azerbaijan. For China, Azerbaijan is the biggest trading partner in the Caucasus. The total trade volumes first exceeded one hundred million in 1993. For China these are small figures and in the latest years the figures have increased. Over the last 10 years the increase was stable and only in the last year because of the COVID19 pandemic the figures dropped for the first time. But they are expected to rise this year already considering how much China is exporting infrastructure in the oil sector. However, since 2013 international oil prices are downward which is affecting many economies especially the Azerbaijani.

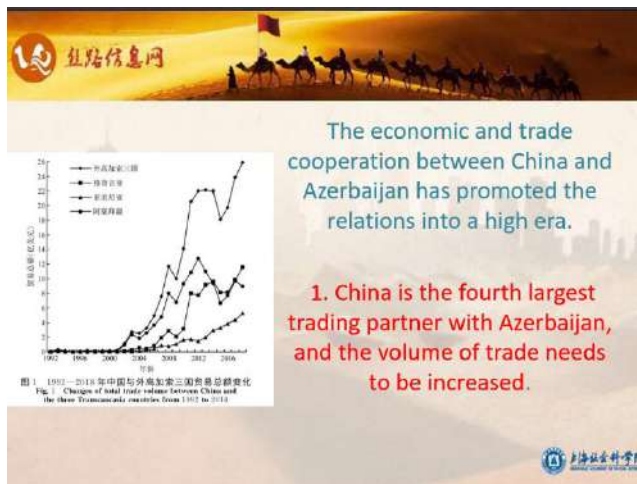


Figure 9

in Azerbaijan: labour costs are not high compared to Central Asia. Chinese exports to Azerbaijan are mainly textile, light industry, machinery, and transportation equipment. Geopolitical and geographical factors are affecting China-Azerbaijan trade relations more and more. BRI entering Azerbaijan proves how important Azerbaijan's location is. It connects China to Europe. From Soviet times, Russia has been part of trade and other kinds of relations between Azerbaijan and China. In the period of post-Soviet era, China has not fully built the geopolitical relations with three Caucasian countries. With the development of the Caucasian countries in recent years, there are significant changes within the countries in economic development, foreign direct investments, business environment and new treaties with China. Azerbaijan's model of development, which is energy resources oriented, is vulnerable to uncertainties and volatilities of the

market. At this panel I heard for the first time about the Free Trade Zone in Azerbaijan, and I find it very attractive for Chinese companies and investors.

I also would like to highlight cooperation during the COVID19 pandemic. The Chinese-Azerbaijan cooperation during these pandemic years was very neutral and demonstrated a common development concept. The International Centre of Nizami Ganjavi has featured the promotion of the video “Come to Wuhan, come to China” to support China. Azerbaijan has deployed more than one hundred thousand medicals, protective caps, masks, and four tons of medical different kinds of materials to different regions of China. Azerbaijani Heydar Aliyev Foundation has donated and supported China in difficult pandemic times. When the pandemic reached Azerbaijan, China also gave its hand in a timely manner. Number of State and private enterprises have donated medical supplies such as testing kits and ventilators. The Azerbaijani ambassador has pointed out that Chinese efforts have reached the goal and supported global fight with the pandemic. This proves that within BRI we can work together with Azerbaijan.

All three Caucasian countries are located on the crossroads of Europe and Asia, it is part of ancient Silk Road and modern Eurasian transportation corridors. It connects China, Central Asia and Europe. My belief is that Azerbaijan's involvement in BRI has also increased its significance as a transit route. The Caucasian countries have good trade conditions with neighbouring countries. Also, Georgia has signed FTAs with the EU and Turkey, Armenia is part of Eurasian Economic Union, and Azerbaijan actively participates in the EU's Eastern Partnership Programs. In addition to the fact that all three Caucasian countries have good relations with China, Azerbaijan and Georgia are founding countries of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway (BTK) is an important part of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, that starts from Southeast Asia and China, runs through Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia and further to European countries. BTK is a very important infrastructure project. After it was completed the route from China to Europe took only 15 days, although before it took around 45 days. The railway opened in 2017 and has entirely transformed the connectivity landscape of the region. This project will be developed more when the railway network connecting Western Turkey to Europe will be finalised. Also need to be brought into coherence such aspects as transit tariffs, customs. The North-South International Transport Corridor is also to be highlighted. With signing MoU between Russia-Turkey-Azerbaijan in May 2019. It allows the merger of the Russian Siberian Railway with the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars. Russia, Iran, and India have put forward an initiative as early as 2002. This agreement will lead to expansion of trade and promotion of all kinds of economic relations between these three countries. The combination of Baku Tbilisi Kars railroad with the International North South transport corridor means that Azerbaijan has become an important hub that connects East and West, North and South Transportation corridors.

BRI plans to rebuild the ancient Silk Road, which is the main route connecting the mainland. This route connects Europe, Africa, and Asia, and passes through more than 65 countries, with a population of approximately 4.4 billion, accounting for one third of the world economy. The BRI will also enable South Caucasus to connect Asia and Europe and make it a more important part of Eurasian Affairs. Azerbaijan, located on the crossroads of an ancient Silk Road, is an important part of the affairs in the region.

Europe-Caucasus-Central Asia Transportation corridor (TRANS-CASPIAN INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT ROUTE), Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railroad, Trans Adriatic Pipeline, and other regional transportation projects have helped to consolidate important of South Caucasus as the regional and global player. Thank you.

Panel III. Critical connectivity: Promoting political stability and resilience in Eurasia

Foreword by Moderator, Dr Irina Petrova

In this panel we will move to discussion of political connectivity moving from our discussion on economic connectivity. I find it particularly important to go into deep discussion on political aspects of connectivity in Eurasia, since it means more than simple movement of goods and services. But it is spillover practices, its diffusion, it's the travel of political ideas and practices. I would like to ask a couple of guiding questions that I would like to be answered by our panelists today. Two major questions I would like to ask are: "What are the political implications of re-emerging political connectivity in Eurasia". Here we can talk about challenges and opportunities of political aspects of connectivity. And secondly, I would like resilience to be discussed, which is also in the title of today's panel. My question is "How connectivity can facilitate political resilience in Eurasia and how Eurasia understands resilience?".

Dr Akram Umarov

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to ADA University and the COMPASS project for an opportunity to express my views on regional issues in Central Asia. Afghanistan is one of my priorities research interests so I would like to talk about this problem and how Central Asia is dealing with this issue. More specifically, I want to touch upon recent initiatives that aim to connect Afghanistan more to Central Asia.

In March 2021, the United States and Tajikistan inaugurated a new trilateral format including Tajikistan-United States-Afghanistan to promote development, security, and peace in the region. The agreement will mainly concentrate on security issues, political aspects of cooperation, people to people contacts, energy issues. Better connection of Afghanistan to Tajikistan, construction of energy and transport infrastructure, further support to capacity building in border security. These three lateral formats is not unique for Central Asia. Very similar format has been established between the US-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan in May 2020 with very similar objectives and structure. So, we can say that this is a new regional trend and new approach of the new US administration's foreign policy towards Central Asia and Afghanistan. Still exists the C5+1 format that was established by the Obama administration but at the same time the US is trying to establish smaller scale partnerships for work on more specific issues on a local level because not all the projects may be relevant to all five Central Asian states. It is obvious that Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan that have a direct border with Afghanistan have different understanding and different concerns on Afghanistan. In my view there are three main reasons for establishment of these new trilateral formats of cooperation: First, the US is leaving Afghanistan and as it was officially declared until September of this year, the US forces will predominantly leave the country. Now it is under discussion if some Turkish troops will be left there to protect Kabul Airport. In these circumstances the US is looking for new ways and formats of work with Afghanistan in new realities, how to support this country despite leaving it. And it is obvious that Central Asia is an important part of this new format and vision. If this new trilateral format already established with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan proves successful, probably this cooperation model will be expanded to other neighbors of Afghanistan, like Turkmenistan.

The Second reason is reconciliation with Afghanistan. This is a top priority for both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Both countries have declared a high level of interest in the promotion of peace and stability in Afghanistan and Tashkent has an interest in becoming an agent of negotiations between the Afghan government and Taliban. Considering the positive attitude towards official Tashkent among Afghan political forces, the possibility of Tashkent becoming mediator is very high. At the same time, settlement of the conflict in

Afghanistan has a lot of positive aspects beyond security for Uzbekistan such as economic and trade opportunities.

Third, the US intends to demonstrate its comprehensive presence in Central Asia and counter the influence of Russia and China in the region. Initiation of these new platforms might be a signal for Afghanistan that Washington has no intention to fully abandon the region despite the withdrawal of forces. This intention is very important for all the states in the region, considering long-term multilateral and balanced foreign policy of Central Asian states. In this term presence of the US is important to counterbalance rising presence of other regional powers avoiding overdependence from any of them.

For this new trilateral format, the most important is to achieve tangible results in the short period of time because Afghanistan and Central Asia are in direct need of positive outputs regarding the Afghan conflict. Looking back to recent history will show enormous quantities of all kinds of formats of negotiations that ultimately haven't been very productive. Failure of communication and contradictory interests of participants of these formats did not let them succeed. Thus, tangible results, such as transport infrastructure to connect Afghanistan to Central Asia, also cultural, educational connection, Central Asia as a potential to connect Afghanistan for development and develop more connections based on that. Thank you.

Prof. Roza Turarbekova

“EEU: Agenda for the chairmanship of Belarus in 2020 and Kazakhstan in 2021”

Today I would like to present to your topic of Eurasia Economic Union Agenda for the chairmanship of Belarus in 2020 and Kazakhstan in 2021. Institutionalization of Eurasian Economic Union continues to develop despite the conflicting interests of the participating countries. Russia acts as an economic and political senior partner, therefore the position and behavior of the next biggest members of the Union determine how the organization will be internally balanced in the institutional sense. The challenge is the huge difference of military and economic forces compared with Russia that balance is difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, Belarus and Kazakhstan continue to build relationships with Russia within the union in pursuit of their interests. Further I would like to discuss the topics of “possibility of internal lobby in Russia for the interest of Belarus and Russia”.

Since the EAEU has created a task of creating a zone of free movement of goods, capital, and labor, we will see how strong the connection of Belarusian and Kazakhstan to the Russian market is. According to data of 2019-2020 Belarus is critically dependent on the Russian market. Kazakhstan is also to large extent, but here dependence is not that dramatic. The problem for Kazakhstan is imbalance in trade. Although the EAEU is

Structural factors of ties with Russia	
Belarus	Kazakhstan
1. Russia accounted for 47.9% of the total turnover of Belarus, including 45.2% of exports (in 2019 - 41.5%) and 50.2% of imports (in 2019 - 55.8%). Negative balance -3 billion out of 29.5 billion. Russia ranks first as an importer and exporter.	1. Russia accounted for 10% of exports (2019), 34% of imports (2019). Significant negative balance: -9 billion out of \$ 14 billion. Russia ranks third as an importer and first as an exporter.
2. Military-political integration within the Union State. Close ties and coordination of actions in the field of defense and special services.	2. Military cooperation agreement, 16.10.2020 Non-targeting against third countries.
3. Cooperative network with Russian regions, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, industrial cooperation.	3. Cooperation of business groups in the energy sector, regional cooperation.
4. Dependence on Russian energy resources and sales market.	4. Dependence on transit to Europe.

Figure 10

under the economic sphere. As seen on the slide Belarus is in military-political integration with Russia as a Union State. Close ties and coordination of actions in the field of defense and special services. In the case of Kazakhstan, the military cooperation agreement as of 16 October 2020 most importantly does not target any third country. The opportunities following the interests of Russia are not great for Belarus. and Kazakhstan but they do exist. If we give attention to the third point indicated on my slide, which is the cooperation network with Russia, close ties with RF Communist party and industries cooperation in the case of Belarus and cooperation in the energy sector and regional cooperation in the case of Kazakhstan. In general, the strategic interests can be formulated as follows, Belarus is dependent on the Russian energy sources and sales market, Kazakhstan is dependent on Russia in transit to Europe.

Agenda for EAEU for Belarus in 2020 can be summarized to four main points: (1) common energy market (2) no barriers to access Russian market for Belarusian goods such as dairy products, textile, medicines, etc. (3) introduction of stricter government control to certification of goods (4) strengthening the role of supranational bodies such as courts, and amendment of Treaty on establishment of EAEU.

Speaking about agenda of Kazakhstan in EAEU in 2021, I can focus on: (1) industrial cooperation for the purpose of building joint ventures (2) removing the most painful barriers to businesses (3) development and

full use of cross border transport arteries and logistic hubs such as EAEU-EU, EAEU-Belt Way, with a focus on Khordos (China-Kazakhstan) and the Central Central Asia (Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan) (3) Digitalization of the EAEU (4) Active development of relation with the other EAEU member countries (5) New principle of the selection of personnel for the Commission, avoiding quotas in favor of professionalism.

I believe that it is important to understand the context within which the above discussed agendas have been developed and formulated. 2019 was marked by the Russian initiative to deepen integration with Belarus within the framework of the Union State. This was discussed by expert communities in Russia and Belarus; however, the lack of information did not make it possible to forecast goals and implications of this integration. Falling energy prices, tougher sanctions against Russia and retaliatory restrictions, the US trade war with China and uncertainty in international relations in the context of the Trump administration's policy were part of the context. The Belarusian Agenda to EAEU was presented in January 2020 and in February of the same year it became clear that Kazakhstan does not support proposals of the official Minsk. Other factors also included the following:

- (a) Belarus was planning to deepen economic cooperation with China. During Xi Jinping's visit to Minsk has been prepared agreement for investment cooperation
- (b) COVID19 pandemic has affected the official Minsk's plans dramatically. It also affected all societies and communities within the EAEU because of closed borders, reduced contacts, and trade, rising unemployment, and failures of state governments
- (c) Belarusian political crisis of 2020 has not only national but also regional consequences. It has unfolded the US and the EU sanctions. This led to relocation of negotiations over Donbas from Minsk that was serving as a negotiation platform. The crisis also had a human dimension, it has led to tens of thousands of refugees, political prisoners, illegal detention of more than 30 thousand of citizens. It has generally raised uncertainty in the future.

To summarize all discussed above, I would like to discuss further differences in integration interests within the EAEU between Belarus and Kazakhstan:

- (1) Kazakhstan is interested in a way out of continental isolation, and industrial cooperation, while Belarus is interested in access to the markets of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Eurasia in general.
- (2) Kazakhstan mainly focuses on soft industrial capacities of the EAEU, while Belarus advocates for tougher institutional changes.
- (3) Kazakhstan is in favor of a depoliticized approach while Belarus (represented by Lukashenko) is interested in emphasizing the political elements to strengthen its position.

Thank you!

Dr Kavus Abushov

The panel is concentrated on the topic of stability and resilience in Eurasia, and I am going to speak about state weakness, exploring the relationship between state weakness and alignment behavior in the post-Soviet space. Today we cannot separate these understanding, political stability and resilience are integrated. It is societal resilience that contributes to political stability. Which means that we cannot say that a state is strong if it does not have a strong civil society. This goes to the theoretic framework developed in 1990th by Barry Buzan in his “People, States and Fear” book. He said that a strong state is not one that has a lot of military hardware, or a lot of cash in its budget. But a strong state is the one that is in harmony with its society. This also supports the Weberian definition of strong and weak states, which says that strong states are the one that provides most essential public goods such as security, healthcare, etc. Personally, I find Buzan’s definition very relevant to our discussion today.

Conceptualizing all said, we can conclude that resilience is part of political stability, they go in tandem. But when it comes to Eurasian states, I have two hypotheses. My first hypothesis is that post-Soviet states are generally weak states, and this is confirmed by a lot of literature. They are weak because they are not democratic, not caring for their functions properly. A lot of existing literature defines weak states based on Weberian theories. My personal study challenges that in two ways. First a lot of change has occurred in resource rich countries of the post-soviet region. Looking at countries like Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia we will observe tremendous improvement in state building, capacity of state institutions. For example, if we think about the capacity of Azerbaijani state institutions such as the tax system, police, etc. before the oil boom, we will see a huge progress. Oil cash infused to the system has improved it a lot and this is the case when financial resources have created capacity not vice versa, as suggested by several studies, stating that democratization will lead to FDIs inflow. My point is that institutions cannot be built without financial resources. Among the post-Soviet states there are also states like Georgia, where reform of state institutions was possible despite the lack of resources, but my point is that the reform itself was possible in Georgia because of absence of cash and reform was part of a competitive process to get cash into the country. This is my first hypothesis about the post-Soviet petro-states: post-soviet states are not that weak as literature depicts them. Their weakness is different from the weakness of African states. Post-soviet states have inherited certain capacity from the Soviet Union, and a few of them have increased their capacity over the years of independence.

My second hypothesis aims to challenge the view dominating in literature, that if one has a state weakness that is going to translate into foreign policy as well. I do acknowledge that post-Soviet states do entail elements of state weakness in many terms such as accountability to population, transparency. When we look at foreign policy outcomes particularly at the states like Georgia, Ukraine, in the beginning post-Soviet period when the state weakness particularly happened in these states, for example the period of Leonid Kuchma in Ukraine, state weakness did not translate to the foreign policy. My point is that literature stating that the third countries are weak, and that is why they are not able to have proper strategic behavior in international politics, is not applicable. We can see fundamentally strategic behavior of post-Soviet states on the international arena. The only example when we can say that elite interest prevailed power balancing in post-soviet space, is example of Uzbekistan under Karimov’s regime, when we left GUAM and stopped balancing Russia, following the elite’s interest. On the other hand, weak states of Africa are having relevant outcomes in their foreign policy as well. Countries like Azerbaijan and Georgia are aware that they cannot make any risky acts in terms of foreign policy behavior and choices, that will inevitably lead to loss of territory. That is the reason why Leonid Kuchma, despite the elite’s pressure to align with Russia, was acting rationally and balancing powers.

To summarize, I argue that despite the existence of a considerable level of state weakness and domestic instability, many post-Soviet countries have actually demonstrated a high level of strategic behavior and foreign policy coherence at state level, which challenges the existing literature on the relationship between

state weakness and strategic alignment behavior. This paper seeks to answer the question why state weakness in many other states have spilled over to foreign policy decision-making, but in post-Soviet states, domestic weakness has co-existed peacefully with coherent and rational strategic behavior. By revisiting contemporary research on the alignment and state weakness, it argues that the original alignment theories, rather than the literature on omni-balancing, are more explanatory in the post-Soviet space. Thus, this paper argues that in terms of their alignment patterns, most post-Soviet states demonstrate rational and strategic behavior despite their domestic weaknesses.

Dr Eugene Chausovski

“The Geopolitical Impact of Connectivity in the Caucasus”

Thank you to organizers, there have been a lot of interesting insights and discussions on connectivity in Azerbaijan and Eurasia in general. I believe it's an interesting and exciting time for the region. From geographic standpoint projects like railways, pipelines, airports will capitalize on the strategic transcontinental location of the Caucasus in between Europe and Asia, with large markets in all directions: the EU and Turkey to the west, Russia to the north, Central Asia and China to the East, Middle East, and South Asia to the south. At the same time COVID19 pandemic has shown several political and domestic problems in these countries and limitations of economic development.

The Caucasus region is undergoing a dynamic process of economic development, with a number of ambitious infrastructure and connectivity projects being planned to capitalize on the region's strategic trans-continental location between Europe and Asia. However, these plans also face challenges from the complex political and security dynamics of the region. Therefore, it's important for both the Caucasus countries and the external players - from the US to China to Russia - to do their best to work together towards common interests and for mutual benefit, rather than fall prey to zero-sum competition and conflict. Only in this way can connectivity projects promote political stability and economic prosperity in Eurasia.

I would like to highlight the importance of digital connectivity when such traditional connections are being undermined. And I believe that Caucasus is very well positioned to serve not only as a transit and transportation hub, but a digital hub as well. We see initiatives such as the Digital Silk Way project implemented by NEQSOL Holding, that aims to modernize internet infrastructure throughout the region.

Taking all this together, connectivity has a significant economic potential in the Caucasus. But of course, connectivity and economic projects cannot be separated from political issues. There are several constraints and challenges. First is the Karabakh conflict, which right now is in the post-conflict stage. Initially there have been a number of promises to move from military hostilities to regional connectivity and that was discussed at the meeting between Putin, Aliyev and Pashinyan in the beginning of the year. However, there has been an increase in the number of hostilities in the recent months and Armenia has suspended its participation in the process. Some political challenges also exist in neighboring Georgia where political clashes between parties have brought legal and political discussion over the Digital Silk Way project. Wider region, including Black Sea region of Georgia, Ukraine is also full of conflicts. Growing role of Turkey in the Caucasus has so far happened in some form of cooperation and coordination with Russia and during the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. But it has potential of increased competition with Russia and Turkey's role grows. On a global dimension there is US-China competition over the region.

With all of this in mind, what can be done to mitigate challenges and maximize opportunities for connectivity in the region? It's kind of a paradox. On the one hand connectivity projects can lead to concrete economic benefits and promote political stability. But on the other hand, political stability is needed to be there to make these connectivity projects happen and expand in a stable and more predictable capacity. Ultimately, it is important for Caucasus countries and external players of the region to work together towards common interest and mutual benefit and at the same time acknowledging differences in geopolitical interests each of them has. I believe that only in this way all kinds of existing connectivity projects (road, railway, pipelines, digital) can promote prosperity and development.

Panel IV. COMPASS panel: Connecting ‘hearts and minds’ - the relevance of inter-cultural connectivity

Foreword by Moderator, Dr Muzaffer Kutlay

It is my pleasure to host this panel. I am happy that we have all together made to the last panel of GCRF COMPASS panel today and thank you for joining and being with us during these two days.

The main of this panel is intercultural connectivity. During these two days connectivity has been in depth discussed from various aspects including transport, energy, and politics. Intercultural dimension is another important aspect of it. Looking forward for fruitful dimension at this special panel which is gathering of our COMPASS partners.

Dr Nargis T. Nurulla-Khodzhaeva

Zangizur corridor or “dahlez”?

A recent COMPASS workshop on the Zangizur corridor brought forth an eye-opening discussion. The speakers unfolded the meaning of the expression of Zangizur, where Zang stands for sound and Zur means beautiful. The term goes beyond denoting a mere “play of stones and water” or even a geographical location in a mountainous. It demonstrates a conventional example of a territorialized modernity, where modern rivalry plays out with a constant desire to be better than the other. In other words, we often overlook the fact that the Zangi Zur corridor is a classic result of a Westphalian territorialized modernity. For many experts, such an arrangement of knowledge and identity questions have become undifferentiated, leading us to forget the critical distance required between an idea and its historical unfolding. However, distance for most of us connects to linear geography with apportioning and dividing.

Framing Zangi Zur in terms of a corridor brought me to reflect on another corridor, from the neighboring region. A product of a fin de siècle rivalry between the Russian and British empires, today the Wakhan corridor stands as a border of five nation-states – Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China, Pakistan, and India; all mixed and defined. Both Zangi Zur and Wakhan corridors lead one to ponder upon an important question: should we be stuck in defining numerous corridors around, or should we be moving beyond the “Age of territorial corridors” towards the plexus of power and poetics that might help shape a non-territorial and non-political communities with global connectivity?

Recent discussions by Peter Nolan on trade, currency, and language as a platform for historical integration, and Munira Shahidi’s take on common connectivity platform through the “Subqi Hindi” (Indian Style) provided ways to formulate a potential answer to the above-formulated question. Both pointed to a modified understanding of human consciousness and its ability to preserve oneself while giving space to the Other. Nolan and Shahidi reminded me that both Zangi Zur and Wakhan had once existed in what Marshall Hodgson called the “Persianate World”, without boundaries either spatial or temporal.

With this in mind, I would like to offer an alternative to the concept of a corridor – dahlez. A Perso-Arabic word, meaning a threshold state, the term defines a liminal space between the inside and the outside. The historical use of this word takes us back to Sufi philosophy and poetry of Eurasia, particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia. For them, dahlez served as a symbol of a union of the internal (congenital) and external

(public) worlds. One can turn to Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209) for this: Dar in dahlezi tang ofarida/Vujude doram az sang ofarida.

The poetical genius of Nizami, translating whom is a true challenge, underlined the importance of dahlez and formulated the world around through this prism, as many of his Sufi peers did. The latter also included an outstanding philosopher – Al Ghazali (1058-1111). Using dahlez as a philosophical metaphor, he conceptualized a world of heterogenous knowledge and subjectivities. Utilizing the logic of dahlez, which at its core distances from the Aristotelian border logic and moves closer to the Avicennian and Lutfi-zade framework, can demonstrate that cognitive certainty is a necessity but cannot be the only source of attaining certainty and cannot be sufficient in explaining the world around us. Thus, in the modern existence, dahlez offers an episteme and aesthetic possibility of a global critical connectivity or, in other words, a context theory. Such a theory has the potential to bring about a paradigmatic shift in our thinking. Consequently, it will also produce emergent knowledge in our desire to live in a polycentric dahlez, not a corridor world.

Prajakti Kalra

“From Khanates to Nation States: The case of Azerbaijan”

A summary of empires and states in the space of Central Eurasia anchors the discussion on histories, time, and geographies of the communities in this space. The focus in this presentation is on conveying identity from a local perspective (bottom up) and its relationship with the empire/ruler/state (top down) especially in Azerbaijan. The concepts considered focus on the position of Azerbaijan on the historic Silk Road(s) and within larger Nomadic and regional Empires which have a specific/special relationship with trade, central to this space especially for identity formation. The geography and ecology of Eurasia dictates certain characteristics which have shaped identity in this far-flung region for over millennia and continue to dictate the strategic importance of this region. The interactions and exchanges on this space have constantly allowed societies to find ways and means through which to survive and even flourish – whether as nomadic, semi sedentary, or sedentary communities. The history of Azerbaijan is a story of the intricate balance between different communities, connecting to overcome obstacles, and provides a basis of understanding of what is needed for a prosperous future. The unique space of Eurasia has been the focal point for exchanges of ideas, peoples and goods which has led to historians to dub this space as the birthplace of globalization. The story of these communities today which have survived waves of globalization is the context in which to further the understanding of how new versions of connectivity, for example transport corridors and pipelines, serve as important nodes of a continuing historically driven development paradigm.

Dr. Anar Valiyev

“Can the war foster cooperation? Azerbaijan’s emerging new regionalism after Karabakh war”

Azerbaijan’s conventional paradigm of regional cooperation and regionalism during the 1994-2020 period was based on the notion that the Karabakh conflict is the centerpiece of Baku’s myriad initiatives. Historically Azerbaijan’s approach to regionalism was predicated on the notion of excluding Armenia from all regional projects and isolating Yerevan. In its turn, this policy led to the failure of several initiatives of regionalism proposed by the EU (TRACECA; Eastern Partnership), Russia (CIS; Eurasian Union), or some small initiatives championed by Turkey and Iran. The 44-day Karabakh conflict completely changed the paradigm of Azerbaijani political establishment. Official Baku appears to be keen now to involve Armenia as much as possible into its regional cooperation projects and ready to invest into such initiatives. The new paradigm of Azerbaijan and its potential impact on the future of regional cooperation in the South Caucasus is different today.

Being in the center of these grandiose transportation initiatives, it seems that Azerbaijan hardly can change anything. Since the major centers of decision making and finances are either in Brussels, Beijing, New Delhi or Moscow, small countries like Azerbaijan have nothing to offer or change. Small states’ foreign policies can range from keeping neutrality or joining alliances to band wagoning or balancing depending on the circumstances. In this regard, for the small state located between great powers, among this action, only neutrality is reasonable to avoid the tension and to maintain its safety (Thorhallsson and Steinsson 2017). From the President Heydar Aliyev to Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan’s foreign policy mainly has six focus areas including balancing its relations toward the global and regional powers, and prioritization of transportation and energy policies in foreign policy (Shaffer 2012). Being aware of its strategic position locating close to the strong powers as well as possessing limited power itself, Azerbaijan adjusts its foreign policy based on the changes in the region (Shaffer 2010, 2012). Baku as many other small states can provide its territory and get certain benefits from transit, beyond the transit fees and re-exporting the products. The countries can benefit from joining the export to either directly or get a certain share of profit. Furthermore, the country can become attractive for other industries that need investments. Beyond economic benefits, Azerbaijan and other countries can also enjoy political and economic stability from changing paradigms. In its turn, it will impact the Eurasian order more broadly. The region of Caucasus and Central Asia may become the crossroads of interests, investments and soft powers of EU, China, India, and Russia rather than being purely ‘backyard’ of Moscow. Such intersection of interests can help the small states to balance more effectively between the great powers. Thus, the conflicts along the route would have less chances to erupt considering massive investments. Not only Russia but China and the EU would have more to say in settling down the conflicts. Moreover, small countries themselves would refrain from conflicting with each other or blocking the borders.

Dr Artyom Nazaranka

Good afternoon, everyone. This particular opportunity to talk about cultural connectivity, that I am calling human-dimension connectivity, is an example of development of so-called small states. We are being called small states, but in fact we are not so small. First, I would like to give you some examples to further built up my arguments in need of country-to country, culture-to-culture cooperation, not compulsorily involving any third power, despite it happened very often.

I find it symbolic that I have got chance to talk to you a week after diplomatic relations between Belarus and Azerbaijan were established back twenty-eight years ago, demonstrating connectivity on political level in this regard. What is important, are links between Belarusians and Azerbaijanis existing much longer. First prove of that is example of process of establishment of higher education institutions of Azerbaijan, in which man Belarusians participated. These events happened roughly a century ago. Below I want to introduce you couple of names of Belarusians working in Azerbaijan.

Iosif Es'man was born in Misk and was a famous engineer. He moved to Baku initially for safety reasons and initially was appointed as professor at Polytechnical University in Baku. He was one of establishers of activities of Academy of Science of Azerbaijan and later on of Georgia. He was also one of the founders of Institute of Energy at the Academy of Science of Azerbaijan. Later elected as Member of the Board of Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences.

Alexandr Makovel'skij coming from Belarusian famous scientists' family has great efforts in social sciences. He has established very famous Eastern faculty of Baku State University.

It is impossible to avoid mention of outstanding Belarusian historian Mitrofan Dovnar-Zapol'skij, who moved to Azebriajan for health reasons. Mitrofan has made enormous contribution to development of higher education in Azerbaijan. He was a university professor, worked as a vice chancellor and worked for the government. Later when he returned to the motherland, he has implemented is experience gained n Azerbaijan for the benefit of Belarus.

These and couple of other names, are example how Belarusians took part in development of specific, knowledge related sector of higher education in Azerbaijan.

Also, I can bring examples for the years of the World War II. Belarusians are widely known for partisan movement during Second WW. Many Azerbaijanis who participated in the war have made great contribution to the patriotic movement in Belarus and I believe this topic lacks attention on our side.

Taking these two historic examples how out nations were voluntarily connected a century ago, I want to bring examples of initiatives that today strengthen even if not regional but definitely cross-country cooperation. In Science and Technology domain, Academy of Science of these two countries for years support research projects conducted by bilateral research teams. On bilateral level you can find number of similar examples of educational initiatives, attempts of establishment od joint institutions. In current development of the region-specific importance is linked to transport links of Belarus and other countries, and also for Belarus list of them is quite short, Azerbaijan is part of it. Even during pandemic, Baku was one of few cities that was still accepting flights from Minsk. Azerbaijanis constitute eights minority ethnic in Belarus and their number grown by 10% every decade.

Specific importance of human and cultural links that have been established, are not artificial and support existing people to people links are independent of any third party, for example, Moscow, DC or London. So, I will end with call to invest into and support these relations and links.

Closing remarks

Professor Elena Korosteleva

Wanted to start with remark that it is very rare that the second day of any Conference is more interesting than the first one and I want to congratulate everyone with this. I do not even think that this conference should be finalized because so many thought provoking and provocative issues have been discussed and I am really looking forward for common proceedings of the current discussions.

Thank you to the organizers for bringing everything together despite connectivity obstacles we experience in the times of the pandemic.

I believe that this conference has highlighted even more that the topic of connectivity has become niche of the ADA University in the recent years. With so many think-tanks and Universities studying and discussing similar topics, I believe you are now firmly on the map. Now what matters is to think how to continue and embrace stakeholders. We have to work together on how to bring partners from outside to continue work on this discussion as a legacy of COMPASS in the future.

I want to repeat Peter Nolan's remark from the day one of the conference: "What matters the most, when we are talking about connectivity, is the compass of connectivity". To the COMPASS and to all the people who are involved. Let us stay connected and thank you very much.

Dr Siddharth Saxena

I want to congratulate and thank for all the achievements and efforts put together by everyone involved. I want to finalize highlighting the following three points on how timely and impactful our meeting was. Both Professor Nolan and Lord Teverson are part of the highest government level impactful policy level meetings. Both of them have already shared with me how much have been clarified for them during our discussions within the Conference and believe it will make difference in upcoming decisions made. They have shared that have never heard so many local and regional voices before.

The second point I wanted to highlight is importance of hearing Indian and Chinese voices at the conference. That mutual exchange that has happened within the conference is extremely important considering how much on the European level we discuss China and India and how few voices we are hearing from there. Considering the level of the panellists, I believe in impact of the messages they have heard.

My final point is about what we can do more. I believe more representatives of younger generation should be present although it is difficult to achieve.

Thank you everyone for two productive days we have spent together.

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