

**Michal Romancov et al.:**  
*The Southern Caucasus from a Security Perspective.*

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The 180-page book entitled *The Southern Caucasus from a Security Perspective* is the result of work of six authors, headed by the main editor and author of the first chapter, Michael Romancov. Romancov has succeeded in gathering a team of young political scientists who have already become reputable in the Czech conditions thanks to their publications and pedagogic activities. In the long term, they focus on the issues of geopolitics, international relations, international security and, last but not least, the situation in the post-Soviet countries. For all the involved authors, the Southern Caucasus is a familiar subject matter; especially in the case of Michaela Romancov and Emil Souleimanov this topic is one of their long-term research priorities.

The Introduction, which delineates the special characteristics of the region

lying “at the crossroads of several nearby ‘worlds’” (p. 5) and places the development in the Transcaucasia within the context of the current international relations, is followed by five chapters dedicated to particular topics that are frequently discussed — which the Introduction mentions withal — both in the international as well as the national (Czech) context.

The first chapter informs the readers about the fundamental facts on the region and the history of Transcaucasia, and the region-related most important geopolitical questions. Michael Romancov has succeeded when he proposes “(...) [that the chapter] *shows, with utmost historical condensation, where the forces responsible for the current — so far fully unshaped — state borders originated and where they headed for*” (p. 6). His readable

text focusing on, inter alia, actions and interactions (crucial for a geopolitical analysis) of actors in the form of states, local quasi-state units, world powers and international organisations, is a great starting point for those learning about the region. The purposeful condensation progresses well; where necessary, the main line of analysis is complemented with international circumstances or historical facts in the footnotes.

In her chapter, Linda Piknerová deals with the economic-geographic and social overview of the Transcaucasian Region. Readers may decide for themselves, to what extent the first part of Piknerová's text coincides with the realia already presented in the previous chapter; similarly, the issues of the Georgian regions discussed by Piknerová correspond to the main theme of the chapter by Tomáš Hoch and Emil Souleimanov. However, the multiple mentions of certain geographic facts or historical events are not detrimental as they always fit in the context of a specific chapter.

Three conflicts falling in the separatist and armed category are the subject matter of the chapter written jointly by Tomáš Hoch and Emil Souleimanov. The authors provide a rather detailed genesis of each of the conflicts, while keeping an analogous line always analysing the language, ethnic and religious backgrounds, developments in the Gorbačov's era followed by the developments after the fall of the USSR, concrete combats and subsequent processes of searching for peaceful solutions. Indeed, other facts could be added and certain proposed

statements may be grounds for debate. Nevertheless, the comparison of the three conflicts, including their progress, their effects on society and on the overall region and, last but not least, the international community's reaction to the establishment of the *de facto* states, is a substantial contribution in the Czech conditions.

Ondřej Ditrych undertook to process a really complex topic of the security situation in the Southern Caucasus. His text is a remarkable study grounded in, inter alia, the theoretical concept of a security complex. In the last section, he focuses on the role of the European Union in the Southern Caucasus and concludes that it is not as negligible as it might appear to a layman at first sight. On the contrary, Ditrych critically argues that "(...) *the effects of the Union's policies do not match their high ambitions and funds incurred*" (p. 70).

The submission of the last chapter, where Jakub Landovský deals with the issues of South-Caucasian dimension in both the European as well as Czech foreign policies, is (inter alia) an excellent gradation of the theme already started by Ditrych. Landovský clarifies particular domains of cooperation between the Czech Republic and Transcaucasian states, and he frames the activities within wider policies of the EU and NATO in the region.

In the Czech conditions, this collective monograph offers the most compact text dealing with Transcaucasia, its problems, potential solutions and the effects of the current geopolitical situation on

the international relations and relations with the Czech Republic, which is a member state of several organisations important for this region. The texts are well-arranged, and the monograph has

a real potential to become a cardinal textbook supporting university courses dealing with Caucasus, armed conflicts, Russian foreign policy and/or the EU policies.