

**SESSION 2.**

**DYNAMICS OF NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES: EU, USA, RUSSIA, AND CHINA**

**REVIEW ON LENA D. KRİKORIAN'S PAPER "NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY DYNAMICS: FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (Russia, China, Persian Gulf, Caucasus, Turkey, and Iran)"<sup>7</sup>**

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Well thank you very much for the invitation. And I am thrilled to be part of this panel and having an opportunity to read on the research as produced by local researchers. I would like to first thank Lena Krikorian for an insightful paper and I don't even know where Lena is - I haven't met her, there is Lena. Thank you, Lena, very much for all the work and the insightful research you put in to this work. Overall, I agree with most of the analysis. What I would like to do is to challenge you a little bit in an effort to give you some feedback as you start thinking forward about your research. I also wanted to briefly refer to what ambassador Cevikoz mentioned, arguing that the South Caucasus is not highlighted, is not viewed as important in global politics. It is that criticism or lament that we always hear that in big conversations among great powers, the South Caucasus in general is not registering. And I agree with that, and I think as academics, we bare responsibility for that reality. What I would argue, what I would call Lena and other researchers to start reflecting on, is how we think about research on Armenia, on Georgia, and on Azerbaijan.

And to this end, my first point to Lena is, to really challenge the Western theoretical dominance. Looking at the way great power policies affect the foreign policies of smaller states such as Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan is important. But, I would advocate that we should also flip that

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<sup>7</sup> The text is the transcription of the speech given at the conference.

relationship and challenge realism as an International Relations theory: we should start also asking how Armenia and other small states, affect the foreign policies of greater powers. To this end, situating Armenia in the scholarship of small states is overdue. Looking at variables such as the institutions, new power arrangements, new forms of power that smaller states are able to create are important to consider.

The objective of the paper was to study US foreign policy relative to various other major powers in world politics, and understand the implications of those on South Caucasus. I do think that the paper did a very good job in analyzing the US foreign policy, but I think that looking and showing the causal links and mechanisms of impact between US foreign policy on Armenia were somewhat missing. I realize that Lena's task was to look at official statements, and as content analysis it is a very valuable exercise, but I worry that just by looking at the official statements you miss a lot of politicking that is happening. So, I would call for you to diversify your research methodologies, looking also at the scholarship and existing research on these topics including opinion polling, civil society actors.

There is a lot there. I was asked to comment on Russia so I will focus on US-Russia relations a bit. You mentioned that the US is promoting the western model. I would want to hear what that western model is. There are so many definitions that are being floated around. What is the core? Is democracy assumed in that model? Is it market capitalism? Is it human rights? And to what extent that is western to what extent that is American? Prior to the last election, which resulted in a Trump presidency, many western analysts were looking at the world through the prism of China's rise, focused on whether the US will be challenged by China or some other power. No one expected that essentially the United States, which created that benign hegemony and allowed many countries to rise in that framework, would self-sabotage, and start pulling from some of the regional groupings that it created. So, there are fascinating developments that are happening here. It would be fruitful to explore as to why there is such an anti-systemic movement in the US, skepticism against NAFTA and other regional blocs

(note that United States pulled out of Trans Pacific Partnership). I can talk about these issues if there is time.

One quick point. You mentioned US spreading globalization and in Armenia I often hear a concern and fear on globalization and its impact in Armenia. On this, I would like to cite Amartya Sen who argued in an article that globalization is not new, it's not western, and it's not a curse. Essentially thinking about how small states in particular can utilize global forces is really an exciting research avenue. On the point in regards to China's rise within this model, significant research has been carried out to date. Realist analysis in particular has been arguing that historically, periods of great power transitions always have been conflictual. Anytime a new power has been rising and challenging the existing status quo power, conflicts between the two have inevitably resulted, followed by new rules created as a result of such confrontations. Now, international relations as a field of study has been criticized, and rightfully so, for not doing enough work in understanding peaceful mechanisms of power transition. China's rise to date has been quite peaceful. And ironically, as the Trump Administration has been announcing about the "America First" policy and pulling out of Trans Pacific Partnership, the Chinese President has been defending globalization and advocating for free trade. This indicates that this western model did produce certain stakeholders. This is not to say that this model did not increase inequalities, including in Armenia, including all the other countries in South Caucasus.

One more point on this realist assumption regards to the power transitions theory, which has maintained that the US will be overtaken by China or by some other powers - again, this analysis operates in a bilateral model, or a state-centric model. What we are witnessing in contrast is the rise of, what I am going to call, a 3D politics, meaning that we now have non-state actors as exerting significant anti-systemic influence on world politics. Self-determination movements, from Europe all the way to Iraq, de-facto states. There are over 20 de-facto states and there is some scholarship on this. What is the systemic significance of this phenomenon? How do we think about these states? Non-state actors, from terrorists to NGOs, and I apologize for putting these actors in the same sentence, but they do operate via similar

mechanisms in plugging into world systems. Social movements, extreme right or extreme left, that are also on the rise. It appears that we are entering into very uncertain strategic environment. Explanations on polarity and state-centric approaches are not going to do the job, and Armenian scholars need to register that moving forward.

In regard to Russia, there is a mention in the paper that US-Russia relationships were always adversarial, but the paper also admits this statement to be potentially problematic as the relationship deteriorated mostly since President Putin came to power. By some accounts, there are over 70 books since 2010 on Russia that have been published. This scholarship is exploding. However, I think that analysts are struggling to situate Russia as a subject of study. And here the key challenge is to differentiate between geopolitical factors, individual leadership analysis of President Putin as well as domestic factors. Let me clarify a little bit. At the individual levels of analysis one focuses on Putin's leadership as an individual, when trying, for example, to explain the annexation of Crimea. Others argue that the domestic factors, such as regime survival concerns, are important in the shaping of Russia's foreign policy. Yet another group of scholars highlights Russia's imperial nationalism. I have only 3 minutes and I am almost done.

I would actually challenge the statement in the paper that both Russia and the US have Armenia's security goals at hand. I would argue that diplomatic capacities in South Caucasus need to be deepened, and that Armenia needs to take charge of its diplomacy: blaming everything on greater powers, while important to consider, I don't think is sufficient anymore. I would conclude with just a reference to an article by Tom Long on small states. He argues that this is a good time to be a small state, and that globalization provides all kinds of opportunities, economic and political, and protecting territorial integrity, creating opportunities into global economy for small states<sup>8</sup>. In short, Lena, just flip your model by looking at how great powers influence Armenia's or Georgia's or Azerbaijan's foreign policies, but also start looking as to what is the role of small states in shaping these very complicated great power transitions. Thank You.

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<sup>8</sup> International Studies Review, Volume 19, Issue 2, 1 June 2017, Pages 185–205.