

"REGIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND ARMENIA: SECURITY SHIFTS" (INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE)

On November 28, 2018, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (NAS RA), with the support of the All-Armenian Foundation for Armenian Studies, organized the international conference entitled "*Regional Transformations and Armenia: Security Shifts.*" The event brought together notable researchers from various countries for the first time, including Dareskedar Taye from the Institute of Foreign Affairs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Hamsa Al-Kasir from Damascus, a PhD candidate at Yerevan State University. Additionally, the conference featured a prominent American expert in international relations and security, Dr. Bahgat Gawadat from the Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, D.C.

After the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, a new security environment has continued to evolve in the South Caucasus. The ongoing transformation processes and extra-regional military-political developments in the three countries of the region have introduced numerous security challenges, prompting the formation of new military-political alliances and geopolitical realignments. On June 15, 2021, Azerbaijan and Turkey formalized their strategic partnership by signing the Shushi Declaration, which includes a collective security component. In response, the Republic of Armenia has sought to counterbalance the Azerbaijani-Turkish alliance through military agreements with France and India. Meanwhile, Georgia, despite its aspirations for Western integration, has entered a new phase of relations with Russia—an outcome previously considered highly improbable following the 2008 Russo-Georgian War.

The security shifts in the South Caucasus are also unfolding in the broader context of major infrastructure projects, such as the North-South Corridor, which aims to connect the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea, and the Middle Corridor, which seeks to link Central Asia to Europe. These initiatives have significant implications for regional security and economic dynamics. The

international conference organized by the Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA provided a critical platform for discussing the ongoing regional transformations, development trends, and key foreign policy challenges facing Armenia. The conference held both scientific and practical significance, bringing together diplomatic and academic circles to engage in comprehensive analyses of these pressing issues.

The conference focused on the evolving security challenges in the South Caucasus and their impact on Armenia's foreign policy. The reports presented at the event offered a wide range of perspectives, covering multi-sectorial and multi-vector topics. Notably, participants explored the Ethiopian and Moroccan perspectives on African security issues and the Syrian viewpoint on the ongoing crisis in Syria. Additionally, the complex dynamics of bilateral relations involving Azerbaijan were examined, including Russia-Azerbaijan, France-Azerbaijan, Pakistan-Azerbaijan, and Saudi Arabia-Azerbaijan ties.

Further discussions delved into the regional interests of key players such as Israel, Turkey, Iran, and the Gulf Arab states. The conference also addressed the strategic interests of global powers, including China, the United States, India, Japan, and the Russian Federation, within the broader context of regional transformations and the emerging trends toward a new multipolar world order. The comprehensive nature of these discussions underscored the multifaceted and interconnected nature of contemporary security challenges in the South Caucasus.

In his opening remarks, Grigor Vardanyan, Senior Researcher of the Department of Arab Countries at the Institute of Oriental Studies emphasized the importance of the conference, both from scientific and political perspectives. He underscored the relevance of the topics discussed in addressing contemporary regional transformations and security challenges.

The conference's inaugural session featured welcoming speeches by several distinguished figures, including Yuri Suvaryan, Academician-Secretary of the Department of Armenian Studies and Social Sciences of the NAS RA, Gohar Iskandaryan, Acting Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the NAS RA, and Ruben Melkonyan, Dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at

Yerevan State University. The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Syrian Arab Republic to Armenia, Nora Arisyan, also delivered remarks. Additionally, a message from Arshak Poladyan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to Morocco, Tunisia, and Mauritania, was read during the opening session.

The speakers collectively highlighted the importance of the conference as a platform for discussing critical issues pertaining to Armenia's foreign policy in light of ongoing regional transformations. They noted the value of engaging both diplomatic and academic circles in addressing these challenges through scientific discourse.

Gohar Iskandaryan, Acting director of the Institute of Oriental Studies, elaborated on the Institute's role in shaping national security discussions and its efforts to foster international collaboration. She expressed gratitude to Grigor Vardanyan and Araks Pashayan, Head of the International Relations Department of the Institute, for their contributions to the successful organization of the conference.

The conference attracted a wide range of participants, including researchers, postgraduate students from the Institute of Oriental Studies, as well as representatives from other academic and educational institutions such as Yerevan State University, the Vazgen Sargsyan Military Academy of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, the Institute of History of the NAS RA, the National Defense Academy of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, and the Armenian-Russian (Slavonic) University.

The primary objective of the conference was to examine the evolving geopolitical landscape of the South Caucasus in the context of dynamic shifts in the interests of regional and extra-regional power centers. The discussions aimed to analyze the implications of these transformations for Armenia's security and foreign policy.

The conference also explored broader geopolitical and geo-economic developments in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Far East, assessing their impact on the South Caucasus region. Particular attention was given to the aftermath of the 2020 Artsakh War, which has fundamentally altered the

security environment in the region. The internal political dynamics of the three South Caucasus countries, changes in the regional balance of power, and intensified international competition were identified as key factors reshaping security considerations.

Additionally, the conference examined strategic projects such as the North-South Corridor, which connects the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea, and the Middle Corridor, linking Central Asia to Europe. These initiatives were discussed in the context of their potential to redefine regional connectivity and security alignments.

The participants regarded the conference as a success, noting the depth of discussions and the active engagement of attendees. The event provided a valuable forum for the exchange of ideas and perspectives on the evolving security challenges facing Armenia and the broader South Caucasus region.

In conclusion, the "Regional Transformations and Armenia: Security Shifts" conference succeeded in facilitating meaningful discussions on Armenia's foreign policy and security challenges in a rapidly changing regional environment. It highlighted the necessity of continued academic research and international collaboration in addressing the shifting geopolitical realities of the South Caucasus. The conference not only deepened the understanding of regional security issues but also underscored Armenia's critical role in navigating these transformations to ensure stability and national security in an increasingly complex world.

Grigor Vardanyan
Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA

DOI: 10.52837/27382702-2024.4.1-140