



UG SECURITY  
POLICY & NATIONALISM  
RESEARCH CENTER



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Peace Research  
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HSFK

Leibniz-Institut  
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Friedens- und Konfliktforschung

# THE EUROPE IS ...? LONG LIVE THE NEW EUROPE!

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## UGSPN-Conference

June 12-13, 2025



Security, Policy & Nationalism  
Research Center (UGSPN)



<https://ugspn.org/>



The University of Georgia



[www.ug.edu.ge](http://www.ug.edu.ge)



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## Agenda

12 June, 2025

Venue: **Sheraton Grand Tbilisi Metechi Palace**, 20 Telavi St, Tbilisi

**09:30 - 10:00** Registration & Welcome Coffee

**10:00 - 10:30** **Opening Remarks**

Konstantine Topuria - Rector of The University of Georgia

Amb. Pawel Herczynski - Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia

**10:30 - 12:00** **PANEL I: Towards Security/Defence Autonomy**

Europe is forced to become more self-aware and self-sufficient in terms of security provision and defense. The transatlantic security cooperation, which rests not only on the fair share of military burden, but on extensive intelligence and defence industry collaboration, if left unchanged risks to generate significant challenges and threats for the European continent and therefore radically alters its political, as well as the socio-economic landscape.

### Moderator

**Dr. Sascha Hach**

Research Fellow at Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (HSFK/PRIF)

### Speakers:

**Krzysztof Brejza** - Member of the European Parliament (EPP)

**Amb. Alex Petriashvili** - Senior Fellow at Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS)/Former State Minister

**Dr. Michael Clarke** - Visiting Professor of War Studies, King's College London/ Former Director General of the Royal United Services Institute

**12:00 – 12:30 Coffee Break**

**12:30-14:00 Panel II: New Eastern Europe: Enlargement Dilemma**

As the European Union struggles to re-define its Enlargement perspectives, and the sense of strategic uncertainty is descending upon the continent, the European policies and logic of enlargement itself must be redefined and re-formulated. From the perspective of the Brussels bureaucracy, as well as from the capitals of candidate countries, the mechanisms of Europeanisation, approximation and credible conditionality must be offered.

**Moderator**

**Nata Koridze** - Former Managing Editor at Civil.ge

**Speakers:**

**Dr. Kostas Ifantis** - Professor of International Relations at Panteion University of Athens

**Dr. Mustafa Aydın** - Professor of International Relations at Kadir Has University

**Wouter Zweers** - Research Fellow at Clingendael Institute

**14:00 – 15:00 – Lunch Break**

**15:00 – 16:30 Panel III: South Caucasus – Security Through Cooperation and Integration**

The restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan as a result of the lightning wars in 2022 and 2024, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine that propelled Georgia to gaining the EU-Candidate status, once again illustrated the fragility of the regional status-quo and reignited the “ancient” ideas of a stronger regional cooperation between the SC-countries. Whether this vision can go beyond mimicking the European experience and be centered around the core pillars of shared economy, transport and security, is an issue worth uncovering.

**Moderator**

**Dr. Frederic Labarre** - Adjunct Professor at Royal Military College of Canada

**Speakers:**

**Jakob Hedenskog** - Analyst at Stockholm Centre for Eastern European Studies (SCEEUS)

**Ahmad Alili** - Director of Caucasus Policy Analysis Centre

**Amb. Zohrab Mnatsakanyan** - Former Minister of Foreign Affairs

**Nodar Kharshiladze** - Founder of the Georgian Strategic Analysis Center

13 June, 2025

10:30 – Welcome Coffee

10:30 – 12:00 **Panel IV: Future of Autocracies: Societies in Change**

Once heralded as the lighthouse of democracy in the post-soviet area, Georgia rapidly plunged into the club of authoritarian regimes and continues abolishing the remaining liberties the Georgian political system and society were so much proud of in the past. It appears that authoritarian tendencies have an impact on a global scale and increasingly display the quality of a well-coordinated effort. In fact, we are witnessing an unprecedented example of autocratic cooperation not only to survive but to prevail and collectively suppress democratic “challenges” globally.

### **Moderator**

**Dr. Shalva Dzebisashvili** - UGSPN – Board Chair/ Head of the PC and IR Programs at the University of Georgia

### **Speakers:**

**Dr. Ramona Coman** - Professor in Political Science at Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB)

**Dr. Pogonyi Szabolcs** - Associate Professor at Central European University

**Amb. Giorgi Badridze** - Senior Fellow at Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS)

12:00 – 13:00 **Lunch Break**

13:00 – 14:30 **Panel V: Leaders, Parties and Politics – the Organizational Causes of Failure?**

Given multiple challenges in the European political landscape many question the ability of current political leaders to think and act strategically. Others claim that the political parties evolved to strange structures that no longer have any bond to regular citizens, and in fact turned into enterprises that no longer create politics but use politics for personal or organizational benefits, thus causing the advance of populist leaders. This begs for a question whether there are structural causes of the failure of conventional party politics, or the global dynamics of socio-cultural change can serve as the plausible explanation.

### **Moderator**

**Dr. Korneli Kakachia** - Director of the Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP)

### **Speakers:**

**Alexander Sikorski** – Founder of the Zryw Foundation

**Dr. Sanna Salo** - Senior Research Fellow at Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA)

**Dr. Fernando Casal Bertoa** – Associate Professor at University of Nottingham

**Dr. Hans Gutbrod** - Professor at Ilia State University

## Closing Remarks

**Dr. Shalva Dzebisashvili** - UGSPN – Board Chair/ Head of the PC and IR Programs at the University of Georgia

## Please Note:

**Any statements, opinions, or viewpoints expressed by the conference speakers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of the University of Georgia or UGSPN.**

**The conference is designed to serve as an independent platform for academic discussion and debate. It aims to bring together scholars, policy-makers, and experts from around the world to engage in rigorous analysis and exchange of ideas on pressing global issues.**

## About Security, Policy & Nationalism Research Center (UGSPN)

Europe is forced to become more self-aware and self-sufficient in terms of security provision and defense. The transatlantic security cooperation, which rests not only on the fair share of military burden, but on extensive intelligence and defence industry collaboration, if left unchanged risks to generate significant challenges and threats for the European continent and therefore radically alter its political, as well as the socio-economic landscape.

## Mission

As the European Union struggles to redefine its Enlargement perspectives, and the sense of strategic uncertainty is descending upon the continent, the European policies and logic of enlargement itself must be redefined and re-formulated. From the perspective of the Brussels bureaucracy, as well as from the capitals of candidate countries, the mechanisms of Europeanisation, approximation and credible conditionality must be offered.

## Vision

The restoration of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan as a result of the lightning wars in 2022 and 2024, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine that propelled Georgia to gaining the EU-Candidate status, once again illustrated the fragility of the regional status-quo and re-ignited the “ancient” ideas of a stronger regional cooperation between the SC-countries. Whether this vision can go beyond mimicking the European experience and be centered around the core pillars of shared economy, transport and security, is an issue worth uncovering.

## According to UGSPN Mission and Vision, the Center engages in following activities:

**Annual UGSPN Conference:** Hosting a major annual event bringing together scholars practitioners and policymakers to discuss critical issues in security and nationalism.

**Research, Publications & UGSPN Quarterly Journal:** Conducting and publishing research papers, policy briefs, and analytical reports on topics relevant to our focus areas.

**Public Lectures and Seminars:** Organizing public lectures and seminars featuring renowned experts to disseminate knowledge and stimulate public discourse.

**Simulation Exercises & Educational Programs:** Offering educational programs, including certificate, minor programs and workshops, to students and professionals interested in nationalism studies and policy.

**Networking and Collaboration:** Expanding regional and international connections, fostering collaborations with academic institutions, think tanks, and policymakers.

### Concept Note

## THE EUROPE IS ...? LONG LIVE THE NEW EUROPE!

Following the UGSPN-conference tradition, which aims at elevating key events and topics that drive national, regional and global dynamics, the 2025 conference titled “THE EUROPE IS...? - LONG LIVE THE NEW EUROPE!” attempts to address the question of the European Idea and its future and challenges associated with it. We are witnessing the worrying tendencies of growing transnationalization and coordination efforts of autocratic regimes that lead to direct and brutal attacks against democratic societies and nations. Therefore, the conference seeks to identify potent strategies to counter such attacks, as well as to identify key weaknesses (whether strategic, conceptual or operational) of liberal democracies to resist and prove themselves resilient against authoritarian advances. Furthermore, while the prospects of a new American isolationism trigger the old/new idea of the European autonomy in security and defence, the reality and practical challenges along with the existing systemic policy deficits, make the EU’s attempts to navigate to “safe waters” quite questionable. Key panels will analyze Europe’s pursuit of security and defense autonomy amid shifting transatlantic relations, the dilemmas surrounding EU-enlargement with a focus on Eastern Europe, and the prospects for cooperation and integration in the South Caucasus. Further, the discussions will address the entrenchment of autocratic regimes, exploring societal resistance and institutional resilience. The discussion will engage critically with the role of political leaders and party structures in addressing contemporary challenges, including democratic backsliding and the war in Ukraine.