

## **“Today and Tomorrow: Prospects for Peace and Pitfalls of Emerging Technologies”**

*Reichenau a/d Rax, 23-25 October 2025*

### **24 October 2025, PANEL 1, 09.45-11.15: “New Geopolitical Trends in the South Caucasus: From the Washington Deal to Regional Connectivity Realignment?”**

- In past workshops we had discussed the increasing volatility of the South Caucasus region stemming from Russia’s focus on the war in Ukraine, Iran’s setbacks in the war with Israel, and Türkiye’s deeper engagement in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq). We have also previously discussed Georgia’s ongoing geopolitical shifts away from its European and Euro-Atlantic priorities.
- However, recent South Caucasus events, including the Abu Dhabi bilateral summit, and the Washington summit Joint Declaration, have been significant steps towards peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan while having shed light once again on the topic of connectivity, extensively discussed by the RSSC SG over the last few years. Reactions from both Iran and Russia have shown that powerful regional neighbours might be wary of any peace solutions in the South Caucasus if they were perceived as made at their expense. Hence, geopolitical shifts might be back in the South Caucasus.
- The aim of this panel is to explore recent geopolitical trends in the South Caucasus region, and how they might impact on regional connectivity and cooperation.
- Possible questions for our speakers and the subsequent panel discussion might include:
  - How would the outcomes/deliverables of the Washington summit impact on the prospects of peace and regional connectivity in the South Caucasus?

- What plans are there for implementing the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP)? How could they be squared with Azerbaijan’s strategic quest for a “Zangezur Corridor” and Armenia’s vital interest to preserve sovereignty over its territory?
- How should the Georgian government balance its European and Euro-Atlantic commitments with its recent geopolitical shift away from the West? What might be the impact on Georgia’s continued role in regional connectivity?
- What would be the role of Türkiye in implementing the Washington summit’s Joint Declaration, on the one hand, and on incentivizing geopolitical balance and maintaining the regional connectivity of Georgia?
- What would be Russia’s and Iran’s prospective policies on TRIPP? Could they accommodate them with existing regional connectivity plans (in particular the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC))?
- Even though it seemed that a resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict might be closer than ever, including on unblocking and restoring regional transportation, the ongoing peace process might be more vulnerable to political, socio-economic, and geopolitical disruption than it could be currently foreseen. As we know from many past examples “the devil is in the details” and it is yet far from clear that Baku, Yerevan, Washington and the other regional stakeholders have found acceptable terms for implementing the Washington summit deals and for adjusting them to the existing regional connectivity frameworks.

**24 October 2025, 16.15-17.30 and 25 October 2025, 08.30-09.30, Breakout Group Geopolitics & Connectivity: “Today and Tomorrow: New Prospects for Peace and Prosperity in the South Caucasus?”**

I suggest that we follow up on the discussion in Panel and further explore recent geopolitical shifts in the South Caucasus region, and how they might impact on regional connectivity and cooperation with a view to developing actionable policy recommendations.

**Topics for discussion:**

- Challenges of Armenian politics in the runup to the June 2026 elections.
- Challenges and opportunities ahead for ARM-AZE-TUR relations.
- Where should GEO stand against the latest geopolitical shifts and regional connectivity developments?
- US apparent transactional approach: Turkiye IN, Russia DOWN, Iran OUT? Are Russia and Iran inherently spoilers of TRIPP?
- What role for the EU/ European integration? Why should it provide funding and financing to TRIPP?
- Implementation of TRIPP within the wider regional trade connectivity: competition vs. integration of corridors.
- South Caucasus’ connectivity with Central Asia: what possible roles for the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)?
- China and India: the distant stakeholders of regional connectivity and cooperation.

**Potential Policy Recommendations:**

- **Build on the momentum** from the strategic agreements the United States, Azerbaijan, and Armenia signed at the White House **to advance regional connectivity and cooperation.**

- **Push for normalization between Türkiye and Armenia.** *Once Armenia and Azerbaijan formally ratify the peace agreement and relations between the two are normalized, Türkiye should be strongly encouraged to pursue normalization with Armenia.* The **reopening of borders and the re-establishment of diplomatic relations** between the two could enhance the transit and economic viability of the South Caucasus and help set the conditions for a lasting regional peace.
- **Bring Armenia closer to the European and Euro-Atlantic communities, while remaining realistic about Russia's residual influence.**
- **Support the creation of new trade and energy links that connect Armenia to the rest of the region and promote joint Armenia-Azerbaijan infrastructure projects, particularly those that can build confidence.** That should not be seen in competition with the existing transit routes, like the Middle Corridor or Southern Gas Corridor, but to help regional integration, build trust among old adversaries, and aid Armenia to overcome its overwhelming dependencies on Russia.
- **Make quick progress on planning and implementing TRIPP.** Its failure might result in delaying or even derailing the ARM-AZE peace process.
- **Build closer relations with the OTS.** US, EU should start building an institutional relationship with the OTS as they do with other regional and political organizations and blocs around the world.
- **Develop Central Asia strategies that link the region more effectively to new South Caucasus transit routes. The focus should be on connectivity,** and it should capitalize on the recent transport and energy initiatives in the South Caucasus (such as the Southern Gas Corridor and possibly TRIPP) and how they can best be linked to Central Asia to increase regional connectivity.