

# Editor's Note

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The current issue of Caucasus International (CI), titled “Islamic Solidarity”, is dedicated to the changing nature of solidarity in the Islamic world. It seeks to shed light on the challenges faced by Islamic countries as well as their achievements. Thus, the authors from around the world and from diverse backgrounds have contributed to the current issue of CI, providing much-needed analysis of key topics and cooperation patterns in the context of Islamic solidarity among the Muslim states; the importance of the Islamic Solidarity on the issues of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as the issue of Jerusalem.

Azerbaijan has been one of the main centers of Islamic civilization for centuries. The country is also a peaceful multi-confessional society, where groups of different denominations co-exist in amity and fraternity. Last year was declared the “Year of Islamic Solidarity” in Azerbaijan by presidential decree. During 2017, a number of international conferences and events on “Islamic Solidarity” were held in Azerbaijan as well as in many other countries. Azerbaijan hosted 204 local and seven international events in during the year. Azerbaijan was also host to the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games in Baku, Azerbaijan from 12 to 22 May 2017, as well as the International Conference on “2017-Islamic Solidarity: Religions and Intercultural Dialogue”, held on 21 December 2017. Therefore, the winter-2017 issue of the Caucasus International Journal was dedicated to the Islamic Solidarity.

This issue opens with two colloquies. The first addresses the latest developments concerning the United Nations’ responsibility to protect civilians. **Richard Falk**, Professor Emeritus at Princeton University and University of California, and the Former UN Special Rapporteur, provided the journal with vital insights on how the internal functioning of the UN resulted in its flawed response to Syria. The second colloquy was conducted with the Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Republic of Azerbaijan **Nassir Abdul Karim Abdul Rahim** on the relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State of Palestine.

The issue contains eleven articles. In his article, **Anar Naghiyev**, former Dean of the Faculty for Regional Studies and International

Relations at Azerbaijan University of Languages, evaluates the influence and role of Islam in global politics, and the extent of Islamic influence in foreign policy implementation in the context of identifying religious identities. **Pınar Akpınar**, a Scholar and Project Manager at Istanbul Policy Center, Sabancı University, analyzes the role of Islamic solidarity in the conceptions, motivations, and practices of Turkish humanitarian NGOs. **Najiba Mustafayeva**, Research Fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies (SAM) under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, examines the clause of “responsibility to protect” through an analysis of the role of state responsibility as it relates to national sovereignty in the light of mass atrocities committed against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. **Estella Carpi**, a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Development Planning Unit at University College London, reflects on how social membership and acts of solidarity and charity interact within Lebanese philanthropic activities.

**Hüsrev Tabak**, Assistant Professor at Recep Tayyip Erdogan University and **Özgür Tüfekçi**, Assistant Professor at Karadeniz Technical University, in their co-authored article, analyze Azerbaijan’s relations with Turkey following the failed military coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016. They confirm that the attempted coup and its consequences have not had any kind of negative impact on bilateral relations. **Fuad Shahbazov**, Expert at the Center for Strategic Studies, looks at the importance of the strategic partnership between Azerbaijan and Pakistan and the key moments in Azerbaijani–Pakistan relations. **Mesiaga Mahammadi**, Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies, outlines the dynamics and potential of Azerbaijan–Iran cultural relations, and puts forth specific proposals for the realization of this potential and further expansion of cultural relations. **Galina M. Yemelianova**, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Birmingham, provides a historical account of the role of religion in the geopolitics of the Caucasus with particular focus on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. She argues that throughout history, the religious factor has played an indirect role in first fomenting and then perpetuating the conflict. **Narmina Mamishova**, an

independent researcher from Azerbaijan, analyzes relations between the post-Soviet Central Asian republics and Muslim-majority Azerbaijan, which is concerned with gaining political and diplomatic support in the international arena in order to secure the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. **Javid Alisgandarli**, a lecturer at Baku State University, argues that BTK railway project constitutes major breakthrough for Central Asia and Azerbaijan, not only by helping them to overcome the economic development limitations entailed by lack of maritime access, but also by providing easy access to global markets and significantly increasing their role as transit countries connecting East and West. **Rafis Abazov**, Visiting Professor at Al Farabi Kazakh National University, analyzes the potential of land-based transportation and communication infrastructure networks to open the door for greater regional trade.

The current issue also includes a review of **Alexander Betts & Paul Collier**'s joint book titled "Refuge: Rethinking Refugee Policy in a Changing World" (Oxford University Press; 2017. Last but not least, this issue of CI includes reviews of recently published books on Russia's policy in Southeast Europe, the geopolitics of natural gas, Russian media policy, and energy politics in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Azerbaijan's foreign policy and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Finally, on behalf of the CI team, we hope this issue provides food for thought and for discussion.

*Sincerely,*

*Javid Valiyev, Editor-in-Chief*

*Ilgar Gurbanov, Deputy Editor-in-Chief*