

# The Republics of the Caucasus, 1918-1920: A Failed Project of Interdependence

**A public lecture by Beka Kobakhidze**

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**12:00 PM - 1:30 PM**

**10383 Bunche Hall**



**Beka Kobakhidze** is Associated Professor at Ilia State University and lecturer at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA). He has also lectured at the University of Georgia and the Caucasus University, and was a Visiting Fellow of Russian and East European Studies at the University of Oxford in 2018-19. His research focuses on the foreign policy of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921) and the historical intersection between Russia and the Western Great Powers in the Caucasus and the contested regional history of the Caucasus of the 19th and 20th centuries.

**Abstract:** In the political West, it is sometimes questioned why the contemporary South Caucasian states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia fail to make a good package of collaborative regionalism? Why is it that the other post-Soviet republics, such as in the Baltic region, have been able to apply “European standards” in their relationship, but the Caucasian states seem to have failed to do so? Often, it is superficially thought that the Caucasians are somewhat “oriental” mountain-like people for whom the “European standards” remain alien. However, the problem has much greater depth than this simple conclusion--including complex geography, heterogeneity, intolerant nationalism, and competing Great Powers interests, but all this is not new. In Transcaucasia (as the South Caucasus was referred to then), the first attempts at building nation states took place in 1918, after the Russian revolutions of the previous year and the onset of the Russian Civil War. The experiment of independence that lasted less than three years. Careful observation of this past suggests that current entanglements in the region are historic to a great extent and the factors affecting that period remain quite contemporary. Rather than relying on stereotypes, it is necessary to examine the multiple dimensions of failed interdependence and largely unsuccessful mutual cooperation. The first republics of the Caucasus (1918-1921) offer helpful insights.

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