

Summer School on

**Territorial Challenges and
Opportunities for Multicultural
Democracies**

Lopota Lake, 10–14 July 2022

Background document, version of 14 April 2022

1 Background

Georgia became an independent republic (anew) in 1991. Ever since, political and military struggles to do with ethnic and national identity have hindered economic and social development. The [2014 census](#) provides the following data on society's ethnic-linguistic composition: Georgian: 87%, Azeri: 6%, Armenian: 5%, others (incl. Russian, Ossetian, Yazidi, Ukrainian, Kist, Greek): 2%. Religious differentiation largely maps onto linguistic and ethnic groups, with most ethnic Georgians being orthodox Christians, Azeris Muslims, and Armenians Apostolic (ibid.). While notably the re-integration of Adjara, where some 40% of inhabitants are Muslims, [came about peacefully in early 2004](#), sovereignty conflicts with Abkhazia and South-Ossetia escalated into full-scale war in summer 2008. Finally, Georgia's southern and eastern regions, where most ethnic Armenians and Azeris live, have [stayed rather peaceful](#).

Nevertheless, Georgia has successfully embarked on a democratization process over these past 30 years. Thus, if in 1990 its score on the [V-Dem's "electoral democracy index"](#) was 0.3, on a scale from 0 to 1, in 2017 it reached 0.7; by 2020, it stood at 0.6. By comparison, Armenia's score on the same index declined from 0.6 to 0.4, in 2016, to reach 0.8, in 2020; while Azerbaijan's score remained stable at a low 0.2 (Switzerland's score has been 0.9 since 1972, when women were finally allowed to vote). The 2003 "Rose Revolution" swept aside then-President Shevardnadze, whereas President Mikheil Saakashvili's accepted defeat in the 2012 parliamentary elections, paving the way for the [first-ever peaceful transition of power](#). Georgian dream has since won two more parliamentary elections, in 2016 and 2020, and also conquered the now purely nominal presidency, in 2013 and 2018. Although the 2020 parliamentary elections remain plagued by accusations of fraud, leading to a temporary boycott by opposition parties, the [2021 OSCE Observation Report](#) qualified the elections as "competitive and, overall, [one where] fundamental freedoms were respected" (p. 2). Of 50 parties participating, [nine won at least 1 seat](#); the ruling party won 90 out of 150 (60%).

2 Purpose

By whatever measure of "culture", i.e. linguistic, religious, ethnic, historic and/or territorial, Georgia is a multicultural democracy. The purpose of this summer school is to provide some 15–20 Georgian students with a better understanding of the origins and operation of yet another multicultural democracy: Switzerland. More generally, however, we want to explore new political solutions to old problems. The latter have plagued democratic nation-states wherever

the idea of a perfect congruence between cultural, linguistic, religious, ethnic, and political borders hit an empirical brick wall. But the “old” solution of nation-state sovereignty has shown its limits also when faced with new problems such as climate change and international migration. In that sense the Swiss case will also be used to illustrate new approaches to political problem solving such as local autonomy (e.g. the [“2000 Watt society” label](#) achieved in various Swiss cities) well as cross-border cooperation (e.g. as around Geneva, Basel or Lake Constance). A final similarity of both Georgian and Swiss society is the presence of kin-states (Armenia and Azerbaijan in the former case, France and Italy in the latter). This will allow us to dwell on the importance of international cultural and political networks.

3 Method and structure

The summer school lasts four days and combines lectures with seminars. From Switzerland, two experts will join along with some 3–5 Swiss students. The inclusion of Georgian experts and scholars will help build bridges between the two democracies. The two Swiss experts are also the main organisers

1. Prof. Sean Mueller is an expert on federalism and territorial politics; he is currently SNSF professor at the University of Lausanne; and
2. Prof. Nenad Stojanović is an expert on nationalism and democracy; he is currently SNSF professor at the University of Geneva

Questions to be addressed include the following:

- What type of territorial solutions are best suited to provide for both political unity and cultural diversity, in the Georgian context as well as more generally?
- How to devise democratic structures that can accommodate ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, especially in the face of secessionism?

The main course readings will be Wolf Linder & Sean Mueller (2021): “Swiss Democracy – Possible Solutions to Conflict in Multicultural Societies” (London: Palgrave), which thanks to funding by the SNSF is [available fully in open access](#), as well as Nenad Stojanović (2021): “Multilingual Democracy: Switzerland and Beyond” (London: Rowman & Littlefield International/ECPR Press).

4 Organisers

The event is organised by Prof. Sean MUELLER ([Institute of Political Studies at University of Lausanne](#)) together with Prof. Nenad STOJANOVIĆ ([Department of Political Science and IR at University of Geneva](#)). Local coordination and implementation partners include the [International Law Institute at Tbilisi State University](#), the [Caucasus School of Humanities and Social Science at Caucasus University](#), and the [School of Social Sciences at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs](#).

5 Costs and application

For Georgian students, participation is free and covers

- Travel from Tbilisi city centre to Lopota Lake Resort and back; and
- Full board (bed in a double room, three meals a day) for 4 nights at Lopota Lake Resort.

For Swiss students, participation is equally free but only covers

- Travel from Tbilisi airport/city centre to Lopota Lake Resort and back; and
- Full board (bed in a double room, three meals a day) for 4 nights at Lopota Lake Resort.

A limited number of international travel support grants is available. When applying please indicate whether and why you'd need that support (max. 150 CHF per person). Swiss students are of course free to arrive much earlier in Georgia and/or leave much later.

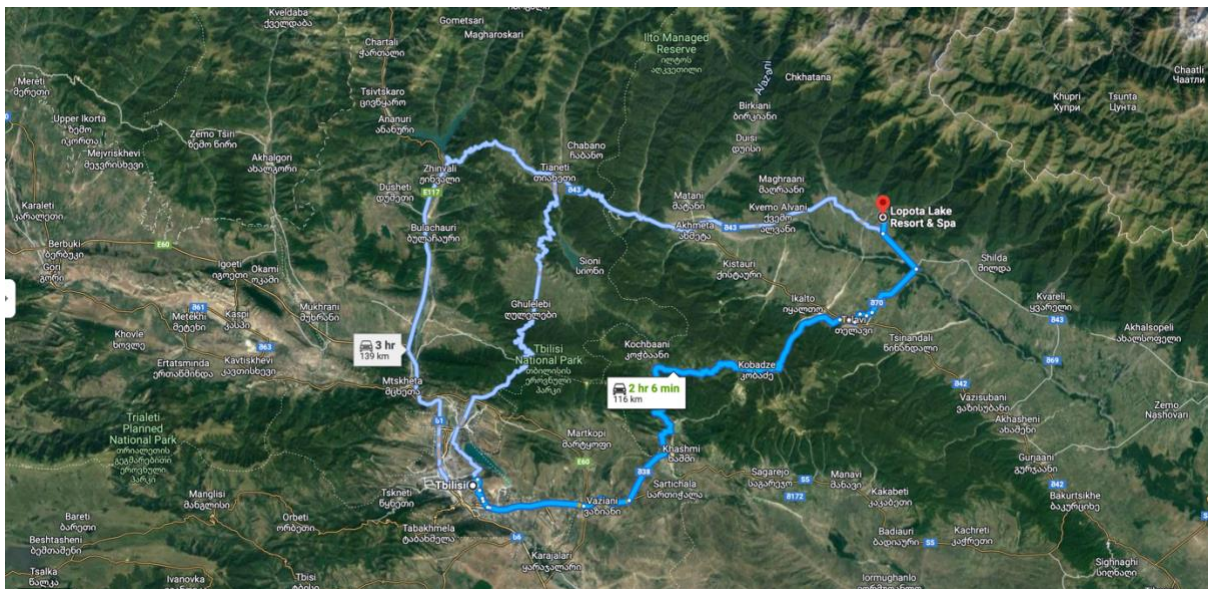
**To apply, please send
your CV and motivation letter (max 2 pages)
to sean.muller@unil.ch no later
than 1 May 2022.**

☞ Please note that a very good oral and written knowledge of English is required to participate. We do not require proof of English skills but trust your self-assessment.

6 Venue



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