

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Since the publication of the Winter 09 issue events in the Caucasus and the wider region have continued to shift, which underlines yet again the region's critical importance for the wider world. The beginning of Barack Obama's tenure as President of the United States has opened up new possibilities for geopolitical shifts in the Caspian region, as he seeks to press the reset button with Russia and offer a hand to Iran. The course of these developments will have a profound effect in the Caucasus and Central Asia, even without the myriad of factors in play in the region. Turkey has tried to reassert itself in the Caucasus, moving towards rapprochement with Armenia and alienating Azerbaijan. The Nabucco pipeline project looks increasingly doomed, even as Turkmenistan seeks to free itself from Russian control. Meanwhile, the conflict in Afghanistan has continued to cast its ripples over the region.

This latest issue continues the efforts of the Caucasian Review of International Affairs (CRIA) to expand and deepen knowledge of this critical region. The Spring edition also demonstrates CRIA's commitment to providing insightful and original analysis on a broad spectrum of topics. An assessment of the EU's Eastern Partnership is included alongside a discussion of female suicide bombers in Chechnya: a scientifically rigorous analysis of Uzbekistan's gas sector is presented along with incisive papers on Georgia's domestic politics. We are also proud to present papers on splits in the Russian 'tandemocracy'; China's expansion into Central Asia; the beginnings of the Russia-Georgia war; the effects of the cases of Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia on international law; and a review of the Handbook of International Humanitarian Law.

Since the publication of the last issue CRIA has continued to increase its subscription and its profile elsewhere. The Review has been included in the renowned citation indexes/research databases such as ProQuest Research Library, EBSCOhost Research Database, Directory of Open Access Journals, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory and *Deutsche Nationalbibliothek*. Partnering with the Journal of Turkish Weekly has enabled CRIA to reach an even wider audience, and upcoming partnerships with other regional forums will make CRIA even more accessible. Since March, CRIA's weekly Caucasus Update has also been translated into Russian, allowing CRIA to connect with millions of Russian speakers in the region and beyond. Our preeminent Editorial Board has been expanded to include the distinguished Caucasus specialist Dr. Cory Welt from the Georgetown University. Also two new members joined our Staff.

This continues to be an exciting time for CRIA. The Review will, in the coming months, continue to develop partnerships with regional research institutes and news agencies, and will also be introducing a series of Occasional Papers – some written by CRIA's own staff, some written by outside experts – as well as a series of regular interviews.

Each issue of CRIA, which is a free and non-profit online publication, is the result of voluntary and hard work of the affiliated persons. Therefore, I'd like to express my deep gratitude to all the members of the Advisory and Editorial Boards, editorial assistants, other staff members and all online interns of CRIA for their consistent and profound engagement.

I hope that you will enjoy the Spring 09 issue and look forward to your comments and suggestions.