



## CESS Elections 2022 – Candidate statements

### Candidates for President (one vacancy)

#### Ablet Kamalov

CESS unites researchers of a vast region, which is significant at a time of global polarization. In this present context, the CESS President needs to serve as a bridge between various academic spaces and traditions, including those of the Western and Central Asian academia. I see myself as this kind of person. Being an ethnic Uyghur born in the city of Ghulja in the Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region of China, I grew up in Kazakhstan and got my education and degrees in Almaty, Tashkent, and St. Petersburg. At the same time, I have an extensive experience in research work at universities and academic institutions in the USA, UK, and France, publishing my works intensively in both academic spaces – Central Asian and western. Being engaged for many years in the educational and academic programs of the Open Society Institute (OSI) in the capacity of coordinator of the Central Asian Resource Center (CARC), Almaty, and director of OSI's projects for young researchers and university teachers, I contributed to setting up of professional networks of our alumni working in Central Eurasian studies.

I will use my experience to contribute to the development of Central Eurasian studies. I wish to put Central Eurasian scholarship into more productive dialogue with western scholarship. I believe that the CESS will elect more and more of its Board and Presidents from members of the Central Asian academic community, following the practice of the European Society for Central Asian Studies (ESCAS).

My own work is primarily on the cultural and intellectual history of the Uyghurs of Central Asia, including Xinjiang. I earned my Ph.D. degree in History from the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg (now Institute of Oriental Manuscripts) and my Doctor of Science degree from the Institute of Oriental Studies in Almaty. My recent works discuss the history and historiography of Uyghurs of Central Asia, primarily those of Kazakhstan. Holding a position of Professor at Turan University in Almaty, I not only teach but also lead local and international research projects on ethnic minorities, one of them being a project on the preservation of cultural heritage in southeastern Kazakhstan, which we implement in collaboration with the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London).

For many years, I worked for the Open Society Institute developing projects on enhancing academic and teaching excellence among young researchers and university teachers of Central Asia. As Academic Leader in History at the educational foundation "Bilim-Central Asia," I coordinated programs of the Open Society Foundation designed for young scholars and university teachers from Central Asian countries (ReSET, CARTI, CARC, etc). Those programs facilitated the creation of a network of young scholars knowledgeable in theories and methodologies. I also developed and directed summer schools on History writing in Central Asia at the Central European University in Budapest (Hungary). In the framework of the

OSI program “Regional Seminars for Excellence in Teaching/ReSET,” I developed and successfully conducted two three-year projects on National Historiography of Central Asia and New social history.

I held the position of visiting scholar at the University of Washington (Seattle), the University of Oxford (UK), the Library of Congress (Washington DC), Indiana University (Bloomington, IN), and Maison des Science de l’Homme (Paris, France). I also served as an international expert in the evaluation of educational and academic programs of the European Commission (TEMPUS), Volkswagen Stiftung, OSI, and programs of Radio Free Asia. I am a member of the Editorial Boards of many academic journals, including “The central Asian Survey.”

I have been a CESS member since 2002 and served on the CESS Executive Board from 2003 to 2006 and was a candidate for CESS President in 2013. In 2018, I was elected a Board member of the European Society for Central Asian Studies (ESCAS), and since 2020 I was its President. This is also an essential experience, which will help me to serve as the CESS President.

## Candidates for Board members (two vacancies)

Listed in alphabetical order by last name

### Jeff Eden

I am grateful for this opportunity to apply for the position of CESS Board Member. My engagement with the organization has included discussant and presenter roles at CESS conferences as well as service on last year's Book Award Committee. My published work includes two monographs, two book-length translations, two edited volumes, and many peer-reviewed articles on Central Eurasia. The geographical range of this research overlaps nicely with the broad range of CESS' coverage, spanning Central Eurasia from Kazakhstan to Iran and from Xinjiang to the Volga-Urals. I am currently working on two research projects: one is about conditions in Tbilisi during the Second World War, and the other is about Bashkir and Tatar participation in the Pugachev Uprising (1773-1775).

This year I begin a new position as Assistant Professor of History at Northwestern, and one of my goals is to develop a closer relationship with CESS as a representative of the university's growing Central Asia / Caucasus offerings. I have already reached out to three current and former CESS government members about hosting a future conference at NU, and I look forward to exploring other avenues for collaboration.

As a historian, I would be eager to expand opportunities for interdisciplinary work between CESS' humanities-focused members and its social science scholars and policy experts. I would also focus on expanding CESS' outreach to historians, among whom the Society is sometimes regarded (albeit somewhat unfairly!) as a hub for political science and current events research. Across disciplines, meanwhile, CESS offers the perfect setting for events that break down longstanding boundaries between subregions (Soviet and post-Soviet space, China / Inner Asia, and Afghanistan / Khurasan).

To engage younger scholars and students within Central Eurasia, I would propose the development of a Research Assistant database for regional archives. With travel largely curtailed for the past three years,

and Russian archives off-limits to many CESS members, colleagues have begun seeking out remote collaborations with local researchers who can report back about archival collections and provide scans. These collaborations have become crucial for researchers outside the region, and they are also valuable for the Central Eurasian collaborators, providing networking opportunities as well as negotiated payments for their work in a challenging economic climate. This database (to which I already have two contacts to contribute) could be useful for professional scholars as well as for journalists and students.

### Julie A. George

I'm flattered to be nominated and invited to send this letter of application to be a Board Member of the Central Eurasian Studies Society.

I am Julie A. George, Associate Professor of Political Science at Queens College and The Graduate Center, both part of the City University of New York. I am also a Visiting Associate Professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and the Harriman Institute, where I teach a course on the Politics of the Caucasus in addition to advising MA these. My scholarly work focuses on the intersections of state-building, regime consolidation, and conflict in the Caucasus, especially in Georgia. I am also working on projects examining how social networks influence political decision-making in moments of regime transformation. My book, *Ethnic Separatism in Russia and Georgia*, was published in 2010, and I've also published in *Electoral Studies*, *Central Asian Survey*, *Post-Soviet-Affairs*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, among others. I currently serve as Associate Editor at *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* and Special Issues Editor at *Nationalities Papers*. I am on the Editorial Board of *Caucasus Survey* and *Problems of Postcommunism*.

I have been active in CESS through the years, through membership and conference participation. For several years, I served as the organizer for the Politics and Economics section of the annual convention. I have extensive organizational experience in peer scholarly organizations, having served as the Treasurer and Executive Board Member of the Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN). I also serve on the Boards of the American Research Institute of the South Caucasus (ARISC) and the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC).

### Emil Nasritdinov

With this letter, I would like to express my interest in joining the CESS Board upon the recommendation of Pr. Morgan Liu. I have been engaged in academic work with Central Asia for twenty years since I became a Ph.D. student at the University of Melbourne in 2002. In 2007, I started teaching in the Anthropology department, at the American University of Central Asia, and I am still teaching in this department. Besides teaching, I was also actively engaged in research and my interests eventually evolved into three main fields: migration, religion, and urbanism. I have an extensive list of publications in all three areas.

In addition to my own academic pursuits, I tried to contribute to strengthening Central Asian scholarship in several other ways. For many years, I ran the [AUCA's Anthropology Club](#) and invited scholars and activists to share their research and experience on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. In the Fall of 2020, I created a Facebook group titled Central Asian Academic and Analytical Writing Support Community,

which now has 1,270 members. The community generated a number of activities, such as monthly writing marathons, monthly research review seminars, several projects on special issues or edited volumes, academic mentorship program and it became an active space for sharing information. In January 2021, together with three of my colleagues, we founded [SILK \(Social Innovations Lab Kyrgyzstan\)](#) – a research center that works on a variety of topics, mostly in the field of urbanism. I am the director of this center. Finally, very recently, together with other AUCA colleagues, we launched a new scholarly journal – [Ketmen: International Journal for Central Asian Voices](#). The main aim of the journal is to create a platform that would publish on Central Asia from Central Asia. I am the Chief Editor of this journal and I also co-edited its very first special issue on the Autoethnographies of Spiritual Practices in Central Asia.

I have participated in six CESS conferences: in Astana, Princeton, Bishkek, Seattle, Pittsburgh and Tashkent. I see CESS conferences as the main platform that brings together scholars of Central Asia from all around the world, and I would like to make some contribution to CESS' work myself.

### **Akram Umarov**

I am Deputy Director of the Institute for Advanced International Studies and Associate Professor at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy (Uzbekistan). Recently I was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Center for Governance and Markets of the University of Pittsburgh. Previously I worked as a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies and the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. I received BA, MA, and Ph.D. Degrees in International Relations at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy. I also graduated with an MA degree in Governance, Development, and Public Policy from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex (UK) in 2019.

I have a great interest in security studies, conflict management, public diplomacy, Central Asian studies, CIS countries, governance, peace, and development. My policy briefs have been published in international journals and newspapers like "The Diplomat," "The Foreign Policy Research Institute", "The Oxus Society," "European Eye on Radicalization," "Cabar.asia." I am the author of the monograph "Afghanistan and regional security of Central Asia: the beginning of XXI century" (in Russian) (UWED, 2017). My articles have been published in "Asian Affairs," "Central Asian Affairs," "Asia and Africa," "National Strategy Issues," "Comparative Politics," "Defence Journal" and other peer-reviewed journals.

I have been involved in the CESS activities starting from 2019. Despite the relatively short period of my engagement, we have proposed to conduct the CESS regional conference at the UWED in Tashkent in the summer of 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was postponed, and finally, we could organize and host the first such event in Tashkent in June 2022. I am dedicated to promoting Central Asian Studies in the scholarly world. I think it is especially important to widen the presence of regional scholars from Central Asia in global academia. If elected, I would like to contribute to strengthening the cooperation between academia and the policy world as research should back and influence many political decisions, make our world more secure, resilient, and developed. I am also planning to promote the CESS within Central Asia and increase its members among regional scholars as the voice of the region should be more vocal and reach the wider international community.

## Ruben Safrastyan

Before submitting my candidacy to serve on the Board of Directors of CESS as a member, I reviewed the milestones and accomplishments of this organization. I also tried to identify those areas of its activities that are most relevant in our turbulent times. Then I was acquainted with the statements of other applicants. In the final stage, I analyzed the path I had traveled for 45 years, during which I combined purely scientific work with the leadership of a prominent research institute, as well as one of the central chairs at the university. I also remembered my work as a senior analyst in the parliament and the presidential administration and as a diplomat. In my favor will also be the experience of scientific work at universities in Germany and the USA, membership in various international scientific organizations, and editorial boards of many scientific journals in Europe, Asia, and the USA. My scientific activity was recognized, and I was elected a full member of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia in Oriental Studies. I also participated in election observation missions of OSCE/ODIHR 4 times, which is another argument in favor of my decision to put forward my candidacy.

Summing up, I concluded that I have the moral right to put forward my candidacy as an applicant for a job on the Board of Directors of CESS as a member.

We live in a world that, according to Prof. Haas, is in the middle of a dangerous decade. In my opinion, in these generally difficult conditions threatening our planet and civilization, scientists and specialists in the social sciences can significantly inform people in various countries about this danger and help prevent it.

I believe that, as a member of the Board of Directors of CESS, I will be able to combine the efforts of the members of our organization in the above direction and put into practice the experience I have accumulated in the field of science diplomacy.