

## 10. Georgia

### Nationalism from under the Rubble

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WHAT HAPPENS TO nationalism after it has attained its putative aim: a self-governing territory under the nation's control? A glance at the ex-USSR suggests there is no pattern. The Soviet system—standardizing, homogenizing, and a powerful legacy for all the nations that were part of it—has been an important but unpredictable variable in shaping nation- and state-building among former Soviet peoples.

It was clear even before statehood was achieved that the nationalist movements in the USSR had different goals and tactics, shaped in part by specific histories and demographics, but also by different experiences under Soviet rule. As Slezkine puts it, the Soviet regimes in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Georgia, and elsewhere were united by a state that allocated them separate rooms in a communal apartment, but the tenants arranged these rooms differently and dealt with the landlord in cleverly varied ways.<sup>1</sup> Brubaker is right to stress, as did Rakowska-Harmstone over twenty-five years ago, that the Soviet state reinforced or created nationalism by prescribing national identities and establishing national borders.<sup>2</sup> But the internal design of the rooms, “landlord-tenant relations,” the nature of the neighborhood, and the psychology of the new bosses all contributed to variations in post-Soviet nationalism and why some tenants proved better at managing their newly independent “rooms” than others.

#### Georgian Roommates: Can They Behave?

Georgians, and more generally Caucasians, are perceived as bad roommates. Since 1991, Georgia has undergone two wars of secession, a civil

war, a number of failed (and badly planned) coups, and at least two assassination attempts on former president Shevardnadze. Western commentators often suggest that, like their Balkan confreres (if the Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Albanians can be treated as one group), Georgians cannot shake their bloody past or inclination to violence.<sup>3</sup> Georgian history is conflict, and therefore conflict is Georgian. But nationalism in Georgia today, when put in context, is more “modern” and “normal” than most Western analysts—still reeling from the heated rhetoric of Georgia’s militant nationalist pamphleteers of the early 1990s—suggest. Our focus on national conflict and violence in Caucasia distorts our understanding of Caucasian history and Caucasian nationalist movements and raises broader questions as to what exactly we mean by terms like *ethnic conflict* and *nationalism*.

Caucasian history is not just one of conflict; it has other traditions too, including interethnic cooperation. The recovery of the Caucasian past should not be equated with only “the revenge of the past.” Western academic studies of Caucasia show an overwhelming bias toward national conflict and its resolution, perhaps in part because such studies are more likely to obtain financial support.<sup>4</sup> But this narrow focus leads to incorrect assumptions about the relationship between nationalism and politics in the region.

Walker Connor has pointed out that Western scholarship is confused about the concept of nationalism.<sup>5</sup> Nationalism covers the broadest spectrum of popular movements and states dedicated to maintaining the identity, unity, and autonomy of the nation, however conceived.<sup>6</sup> Defining *nation* and *nationalism* is not the central concern of this chapter; there are many worthy studies on this issue,<sup>7</sup> and the terms have been defined in the introductory chapter of this volume. But as I argue in this chapter, at a minimum one needs to distinguish between the core beliefs of nationalism, on the one hand, and the methods, style, and emphases of nationalist movements and states, on the other. At the first level, most people share the aspirations of nationalism—the pursuit of autonomy, unity, and common identity—but on the second level they differ considerably. Some, but not all, nationalists have an exclusive view of identity, promote popular mobilization around political and cultural homogeneity, and consider autonomy an insufficient guarantee of self-rule free of foreign influence. These nationalists—on the more extreme spectrum of nationalism—are more likely to scapegoat minorities and use force. Yet there are other nationalist

movements characterized by inclusive views of the nation, political tolerance, and civil rights. The more extreme forms of nationalism can develop into moderate, constructive nationalisms, and liberal nationalisms can metamorphose into radical jingoism. However, the distinction between different forms of nationalism is crucial. Many scholars and Western analysts when discussing Caucasia do not differentiate and as a result fail to see the major changes in nationalist values and style in the region over the last decade.

Former deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbott presented a typical outsider's view of Caucasia in a speech in Bucharest in 1998. He declared:

We can all say good riddance to Marxist-Leninist dictatorship, to the Iron Curtain and to the self-styled geniuses who ruled by brute force and primal fear. But the collapse of these modern evils has, in many parts of the post-Communist world, been accompanied by the eruption of medieval struggles over blood and culture. From Bosnia, Croatia, Albania, and Kosovo in the Balkans to Chechnya, Abkhazia, South Osetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in the Caucasus, more Europeans have died violently in the last five years than in the previous forty five.<sup>8</sup>

There are four assumptions here, all of which misrepresent nationalism in Georgia and in Caucasia more generally. National conflicts in Georgia (specifically in Abkhazia and South Osetia) are neither medieval nor about blood. Such overly historicist interpretations simplify the causes of the post-Soviet crisis and reflect a crude primordialist view of nations in the region, a view that nationalism was always present and is now, after a period of repression, back with a vengeance. This view, fueled by the media, suggests that politics in Georgia and Caucasia is driven by the past and is always "national," rarely local.<sup>9</sup> Thinking nationally ourselves, and drawing on our own obsession with "ethnic identity" in the United States, we fail to explore the many other perspectives that can determine political behavior in Caucasia, whether they are generational differences, gender, class and economic interests, local and regional identities, or institutional loyalties.

Second, nationalism in Georgia cannot be blended, as Talbott supposes, into a Balkan pot. Superficial similarities ignore vital differences between the two regions and overestimate the importance of violent conflict in Georgian nationalism. Far too often, nationalism and violence in Georgia are considered partners in crime, whereas nationalism—talking more gen-

erally—is no more inherently violent than most other ideologies and its contemporary form in Georgia today has much less to do with the centuries of violent imperial competition in Caucasia than is often suggested.<sup>10</sup>

Frequently, liberalism is presented as a rational enterprise based on a social contract between the state and its citizens, and is counterposed as a peaceful ideological alternative to nationalism in Caucasia. But liberalism's early strivings at statehood during a period of major economic restructuring (the industrial revolution) and domestic adjustment—similar to Georgia's position today—were characterized by violence and social unrest. A glance at national anthems shows that most of today's liberal democracies were born out of war.<sup>11</sup> Mill, Smith, Nodia, and others, have pointed out that the philosophical roots of nationalism and liberal democracy are intertwined.<sup>12</sup> When scholars differentiate between nationalism and liberalism, it is worth remembering that nationalism, based on nineteenth-century principles of popular sovereignty, citizen equality, democracy, and self-determination, defined—and still does—the historical, territorial, and cultural parameters of modern liberalism. Quebec is the most obvious example of a polity where liberalism and nationalism serve as a common source of “statehood.” Trying to introduce an ethnically neutral liberalism as an alternative to nationalism is both conceptually confusing and overrates its power to eradicate “ethnic” conflict.

But Georgian nationalism *is* different from “ours” in the United States and Western Europe.<sup>13</sup> Yet the difference is often exaggerated and becomes a crude demonstration of the superiority of our own “civic” form of nationalism. This is reflected by Talbott's third (implied) assumption that *we* have a “civilized” (“civic”) nationalism, and *they* in Georgia and Caucasia have an atavistic (“ethnic”) nationalism. In his speech, Talbott does not mention Northern Ireland, the Basque region, the successful right-wing parties in Europe, or the growth of violent militias in the United States, all of which show that some nationalisms in the West, superficially at least, have no fewer “ethnic” roots than their counterparts in the East. Germany's official concept of citizenship is still ethnically determined, and even the cosmopolitan French do not accept all national groups resident in France as French, even when those groups want to be.<sup>14</sup> Restrictive immigration and asylum laws in most Western democracies show a continued fear of foreigners. There is a suspicious Orientalism to Talbott's selection of countries where “ethnic violence” occurs, despite his generous use of the term *Europeans*. Mestrovic, in his book *The Balkanization of the West*, argues

convincingly that the civic-liberal and ethnic-illiberal paradigms are misleading. In his view, popular sentiments in liberal democracies are “ethnic,” “emotional,” and tradition-bound too, and the attempt to deny it tells us more about Westerners’ self-perception than it does about the Balkans.<sup>15</sup>

Fourth, Talbott implicates whole countries in the “crimes” of nationalism. Just as one would not expect public and congressional opinion to coincide in the United States, so in Georgia and other countries of the former Soviet Union—where there are particularly strong traditions of hierarchy, regionalism, and long-standing cultural and economic divisions between leaders and the led—we need more discernment in judging the depth of “ethnic” nationalism. In the Abkhazian and South Osetian conflicts, the majorities on both sides were the victims of national conflict, not the progenitors.

Nationalism defines our categories of thinking. Most of our citizens—with the exception of a few cosmopolitans—are firm believers in the national idea. Arguably, the violent extension of American national interests into Grenada and Panama reflects an even more militant nationalism than Georgia’s attempt to hang on to its internationally accepted state borders. But comparisons of the two nationalisms would almost certainly lead to the opposite conclusion among U.S. citizens. This is because many politicians (and scholars) who talk about the resurgence of nationalism in the late twentieth century focus not on large established states like the United States but rather on small nations like Georgia, challenging already-existing states, or on weak states like Russia, characterized by an absence of consensus and by serious internal conflicts.<sup>16</sup>

The violence that may accompany these conflicts is often thoughtlessly interpreted as “ethnic.” But violence between “ethnic groups” is not necessarily ethnic. Even if we establish that the violence is *ethnic*, the term is used too loosely and blurs the many sources and expressions of conflict—whether they are employment, representation, participation, the environment, or legislative changes that threaten to change the status of national groups. Hroch, Gellner, and Nairn have all stressed the importance of understanding the economic, political, and educational sources of national identity and mobilization, but many of us seem to have forgotten this.<sup>17</sup>

To understand nationalism in places like Georgia (and in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Chechnya), we need both a broader perspective and a finer focus. Mestrovic points out there are “good” (compassionate and peaceful) and “bad” (egoistic and megalomaniacal) nationalisms.<sup>18</sup> They coexist

both within a country and between countries. Nationalism, like most other *-isms*, is diverse and adaptable. Within a few years, new conditions may overturn its champions, transform its goals, and dramatically alter its modes of expression.

This is the case in Georgia. Georgian nationalism cannot be defined simply by the experience of the last decade. The imperial breakup of the 1990s produced specific circumstances: socioeconomic crisis, state disintegration, and challenges to territorial and political legitimacy. Georgian nationalism during this period *was* violent, state challenging, and ethnically based, but our focus on this period distorts our understanding of what came before and what followed. Georgian nationalism cannot be caricatured as “tribal” or “medieval,” because nationalism in Soviet and post-Soviet Georgia, like our own nationalisms, has not always been state challenging, violent, or ethnic. Nationalism in Georgia today, understood as a part of the state-building process, is arguably constructive, legitimate, and stabilizing. It can be used as a source of cohesion, much as it was in Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The focus on nationalist violence in Georgia excludes the “valleys” in favor of the “peaks.” It encourages an anachronistic vision of crises and nationalist tensions, which are then incorporated into a “pattern” of a dedicated struggle for national liberation. A review of Georgian history suggests a much more complicated and less heroic path. Georgian nationalism has been and is now only part of a wide complex of political, economic, and power relationships. It is one factor—and not always the most important—that we have to consider in our assessment of pre- and post-Soviet developments. For most Georgians today, as in the past, it is the economy and social conditions, not radical nationalism, that determines political behavior.

### The Weakness of Georgian Nationalism

Georgia’s route to nationhood was not unusual. Before the nineteenth century, Georgian elites were multiethnic and multid denominational, and the Georgian state absorbed Armenians, Osetians and Abkhazians into the country’s ruling class, representing what Brubaker calls an “assimilationist” culture.<sup>19</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century, under the influence of a Russian modernizing state (Georgia was annexed by the Russian Empire in the first decades of the nineteenth century) and a Europeanized Georgian intelligentsia, a modern sense of nationhood spread among

Georgian elites. Ethnicity became the focus of a new secular intelligentsia, and switching or combining identities became increasingly difficult.<sup>20</sup> The new emphasis on “ethnic ancestry” (what Brubaker calls a “differentialist” culture) increased competition between emerging national groups in the towns and cities. Georgian nationalists bemoaned the demographic imbalance in the capital (Georgians were a minority in Tbilisi until the 1920s) and campaigned for more political power. But despite inspiring struggles by newly formed Italians, Hungarians, and Greeks against imperial overlords, by the end of the nineteenth century, Georgians were flocking not to nationalism but to the internationalist ideology of socialism as the means to a better life. It was socialism in Georgian colors with priority given to the defense of national culture, but it is significant that no single Georgian party before 1917—even those opposed to the new “internationalism”—advocated independence from Russia.<sup>21</sup> Georgia became independent in 1918, led by a socialist government. But independence was more by default than design and in much the same circumstances as 1991 (imperial collapse, economic crisis, and military defeat).

Like all socialist states, the newly created Georgian Democratic Republic was a nationalist/socialist hybrid. It was a nationalizing state, standard for all new states seeking legitimacy in the twentieth century. The Georgianization program—in education, the courts, and administration—encountered resistance from many non-Georgian minorities, fearful of economic and political domination by the new Georgian elite. There are many examples of Georgian excesses during this period, such as the Georgian government’s refusal to admit Armenian refugees fleeing the Ottoman Empire into Tbilisi in May 1918, its bloody suppression of Osetian revolts in 1918, 1919, and 1920, and of Abkhazian insurrections in 1918 and 1919. But in a country experiencing economic collapse, surrounded by a civil war, and facing threats of invasion by the volunteer army, Bolsheviks, and neighboring Armenia, such military solutions were as much about security as about settling ethnic scores (there were in fact no ethnic scores to settle). The Bolsheviks—after 1920 a major threat to Georgian sovereignty—exploited justified dissatisfaction among Georgia’s national minorities and turned them into major challenges to the state’s survival.

Much of the resistance to the Georgian central government—there were revolts among Georgian peasants as well—was land related, driven by economic as well as ethnic concerns.<sup>22</sup> This is not to deny the brutality of the Georgian National Guard during these years, which by its action foolishly

turned economic and social demands into secessionist ones. But to argue that the Georgian government's repressive actions in 1918–21 were part of a pattern of ancient and, by implication violent, animosities is wrong. They were related more closely to state collapse, economic chaos, and foreign threats to security, all of which generated extreme economic and political insecurities among Georgians and their minorities.

In the Soviet period, the West's image of Georgian nationalism was transformed. From the negativity it had acquired in 1918–21, it became a brave anti-Soviet movement compatible with Western norms of self-determination.<sup>23</sup> But both the chauvinist image of 1918–21 and the courageous image of Georgian national resistance from 1921 to 1991 ignore history and context. After the Soviet invasion of 1921, Georgian nationalism either went underground (Georgian nationalist groups practically disappeared after a failed 1924 revolt to regain Georgian independence) or was rechanneled into cultural frameworks provided by the Soviet state—what Rakowska-Harmstone has called “orthodox nationalism.”<sup>24</sup>

“Orthodox” Georgian nationalism focused on primarily cultural issues, such as language, education, the restoration of monuments, literature, film, sport, and, in the last two decades of Soviet power, the church. During World War II there was no armed anti-Soviet national resistance movement as in the Baltics and Ukraine (although if the Germans had reached Georgia, that might have been different<sup>25</sup>), and although Georgians were singled out by Western commentators as the most passionate nationalists, their nationalism rarely spilled onto the streets or directly challenged the Soviet regime. Georgian dissidence, unlike that of Lithuania, was represented by a dozen or so prominent, but largely unknown, figures, with no mass base. Even nationalist dissent in Ukraine, weak though it was, was more of a challenge to the Soviet regime than in Georgia.

There were only two significant occasions between World War II and 1980 when Georgian nationalism openly expressed its discontents.<sup>26</sup> The first in 1956, when twenty to thirty Georgian demonstrators were gunned down by Soviet interior forces, was a reaction to Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign. The mass protest, sparked by the absence of celebrations on Stalin's birthday, had weak nationalist credentials, although the Soviet government's brutal reaction “posthumously” made the demonstration into a nationalist one. The second occasion was in 1978 when Georgians, primarily students from Tbilisi, demonstrated against the Soviet government's decision to remove Georgian as the official language of the republic.<sup>27</sup>



This is not to suggest that Georgian nationalism was feckless—individual Georgians made great sacrifices for their beliefs—but it was rarely a mass protest movement, and its focus was neither on territory (like continuing Armenian protests and petitions over Nagorno-Karabakh in the Soviet period) nor on the exclusion of national minorities. Before perestroika, Georgian nationalism had adapted itself to the colonial framework. It fully exploited what Scott has called “everyday forms of resistance,” and without directly challenging the Soviet state, it usurped its power.<sup>28</sup>

The Soviet context partly explains Georgian nationalism’s benign focus. There was little opportunity for open protest. But the Soviet empire shaped Georgian nationalism in other important ways. First, it maintained and promoted Caucasian traditions of ethnic intermixing. Georgians, Abkhazians, Osetians, Armenians, and others shared villages, yards, schools, and places of employment. Inter-marriage between Georgians (more specifically Mingrelians, a Georgian subnational group living in West Georgia) and Abkhazians (at least those living in the southern regions of Ochamchire and Sukhumi) was common, and social intermixing and inter-marriage, promoted by the process of migration to major Georgian towns, were evident among Georgians and other groups such as South Osetians.<sup>29</sup> This is not to deny the prejudices that existed between Georgians and non-Georgians at all levels of interaction or to romanticize, as Georgians do, their history of tolerance (Serbs claim the same tradition). The Soviet state, by allocating Georgians a union republic, also helped reinforce Georgians’ sense of cultural and historical superiority. But at the same time, it enhanced Georgia’s inclusive traditions. Second, the Soviet state successfully maintained Georgian nationalism’s traditional focus on cultural issues, especially language and literature. Georgian nationalism remained, as it did in the nineteenth century, a cultural phenomenon, and it was only with perestroika and the threat of Abkhazian and South Osetian secessionism that Georgian nationalism became a political movement that challenged the Soviet state.

### **Georgian Nationalism: From Populism to Pragmatism**

Gamsakhurdia and the Rise of Populist Nationalism, 1989–92

Zviad Gamsakhurdia was a radical nationalist. Brought to power by a wave of popular nationalism in the October 1990 Supreme Soviet elections, he

was not simply an ethnic entrepreneur who, using nationalist slogans to gain authority, manipulated a formerly moderate Georgian populace into a chauvinistic mob. Resource theories of nationalism, which stress manipulation by elites, are inadequate explanations of nationalisms' successes. Gamsakhurdia, after eight months as chairman of Georgia's Supreme Soviet, was elected president in May 1991 with 87 percent of the vote. His success was based on ideas and anxieties that resonated among Georgians—the threat of Georgia's disintegration, the fear of Russian military power, and the perceived neglect of Georgian interests. In contrast to 1918, almost every party by 1989–90 was advocating independence, the great panacea for Georgian ills. This was a time of national trauma; twice in 1989 Georgians had been killed in conflict with Soviet interior troops—on April 9 at a popular demonstration outside parliament advocating independence and on July 15 in clashes with Abkhazians in Sukhumi.<sup>30</sup> Georgians, in Gamsakhurdia's view, were being victimized in their own state. The reaction of both Georgians and the minority Abkhazians and Osetians to Gamsakhurdia's militant nationalist rhetoric was understandable. In a time when physical and economic security was unprotected, national solidarity and self-reliance were the obvious answer. In circumstances like those of 1990–91, with the threat of dissolution of the state, economic collapse, and hostile declarations from a still militarily powerful imperial overlord, it is hard to imagine even "civic" European nations, let alone newly independent states led by inexperienced elites, abjuring militant nationalist ideas.

But a closer look at Georgian nationalism from 1989 to 1992 shows this was neither the resurgence of latent ethnic hatreds nor the expression of a violent political culture. Rather, it was contingent on extraordinary economic, political, and physical insecurities brought about by the collapse of Soviet power. It is worth remembering that from 1989 to 1990 those leading the Georgian national liberation movement tried to divert popular focus from national minorities. Representatives of the Kurdish and Armenian communities, among others, took part in the early rallies for Georgian independence (there was a similar pattern in the Baltics), and Georgian radicals in these early years saw the "ethnicization" of Georgian politics as a deliberate Kremlin provocation.<sup>31</sup> At the April 9, 1989, public demonstration, few of the painted banners or chalked slogans mentioned Abkhazia, despite a March 1989 call at Lykhny in Abkhazia for secession.<sup>32</sup> The focus was on Georgian independence.

Gamsakhurdia, who split with the radical opposition in May 1990 in

preparation for the October/November Supreme Soviet elections, by contrast focused on the demographic threat from within. This is what Lowell Barrington refers to as “sovereignty-protecting” nationalism. Driven by a mystical vision of Georgian unity and the threat of multiple enemies, Gamsakhurdia’s radical nationalist rhetoric helped shape a psychological state of siege. Leaders like Vladislav Ardzinba (Abkhazia) and Torez Kulumbe-gov (South Osetia) followed suit. They used the demographic card even more effectively, defending communities that numerically were in a far worse situation than the Georgian.<sup>33</sup> To Georgians, the anti-Georgian statements of national minority leaders, fed by Gamsakhurdia’s own threats, proved their disloyalty.

However, even Gamsakhurdia in his most intense moments of nationalist apoplexy did not advocate the forcible expulsion of national minorities or question minorities’ cultural rights in Georgia.<sup>34</sup> And although his government abolished South Osetia’s regional status in December 1990 in response to a South Osetian declaration of independence and unsanctioned elections to the South Osetian Supreme Soviet a few days before, he did not question Abkhazian autonomy. In 1991 he negotiated a consociationalist agreement with the Abkhazians which put Georgians living in Abkhazia at a political disadvantage. The Abkhazians, who made up only 17 percent of the autonomous republic’s population, received twenty-eight seats in the sixty-five-seat Abkhazian parliament; the Georgian community (46 percent) received twenty-six seats; and the remaining population (37 percent), consisting mainly of Armenians, Greeks, and Russians, received eleven seats. No constitutional change was possible without two-thirds of the vote, which gave Abkhazians relatively secure protection of their existing legal rights.<sup>35</sup>

Gamsakhurdia’s differential treatment of the Abkhazians and South Osetians was based on an official Soviet paradigm: the former were autochthonous, the latter, nonindigenous.<sup>36</sup> The rights of other immigrants were covered by different legislative acts.<sup>37</sup> Whatever Gamsakhurdia’s motivation—calculation that things would change in Georgia’s favor or that the alternative would lead to a conflict with Abkhazia and ultimately Russia—the consociationalist policies in Abkhazia show inconsistencies with Gamsakhurdia’s reputation as an uncompromising nationalist who believed in “Georgia for the Georgians.” The argument is not that Gamsakhurdia was a liberal nationalist; he was not. He threatened, bullied, and belittled Georgia’s national minorities. But the evidence of these years,

including the expulsion of Gamsakhurdia in January 1992, suggests that Gamsakhurdia, though a bully, was capable of pragmatic calculation. Not all national groups were equally bad or unacceptable as partners in the Georgian state.

Finally, and important to remember, Gamsakhurdia's support was not based solely on his nationalist credentials. Like Boris Yeltsin, Juan Perón, and other populist leaders, Gamsakhurdia's appeal was as much about defense of the little man, anticommunism, rejection of privilege, and support of blue collar state-subsidized jobs as it was about national glory. One cannot understand the Gamsakhurdia phenomenon without going outside the nationalist framework. Gamsakhurdia was an authoritarian populist who scapegoated not only national minorities but Georgian groups too, such as the "red intelligentsia" and university students. His promotion of state paternalism, emphasis on personal loyalty, centralization of power in a strong executive, appeal to provincial voters, cultivation of charisma, and use of plebiscites and public rallies tell us more about post-Soviet society between 1989 and 1991 than does a narrow focus on nationalism. In fact, the theoretical framework of an illiberal radical populism is a more useful tool for analyzing the Gamsakhurdia phenomenon than nationalism, which, though a vital part, was only a part.<sup>38</sup>

#### Shevardnadze and the New Pragmatism

After he came to power in March 1992, Eduard Shevardnadze slowly shifted Georgian politics from Gamsakhurdia's illiberal democratic populism toward a more stable, elite-mediated "civic" nationalism. There have, of course, been setbacks. Shevardnadze's government continued to experience serious problems integrating Georgia's national minorities into the political system. There was little coherent strategy and poor implementation of policies on national minority rights. The Georgian parliament did not pass any important laws on the national question; a controversial bill on national minorities, under discussion in parliament since 1996, was never passed. The same was true of a language law.<sup>39</sup> The new electoral systems introduced in 1992, 1995, and 1999 produced few national minority deputies to represent Georgia's 25–30 percent non-Georgians.<sup>40</sup> Due to the continued postponement of Georgia's territorial organization, the status of non-Georgia areas remained undecided (too much decentralization was seen by many parliamentarians as an encouragement to secession). Few resources were allocated to teaching non-Georgians the Georgian language.

Non-Georgians in the regions continued to complain of police “targeting,” and large numbers of Azerbaijanis, Russians, Greeks, and Armenians emigrated, although mostly for economic reasons.

But there have been noteworthy successes. Shevardnadze’s government established the basic legal and constitutional framework for a democratic multinational society. The law on citizenship, passed in March 1993, in contrast to Latvia and Estonia, granted unconditional citizenship to all Georgia’s residents. No special qualifications were required, including knowledge of the state language. The constitution, criminal code, code of criminal procedure, the Law on Public Associations of Citizens, the Law on Education, and the Law on Culture all laid the basis for civil and national minority rights, nondiscriminatory protections, the right to receive education (up to the secondary level) in one’s native language, the right to a translator in the courts, and the right to set up political organizations based on national culture (though political parties cannot be based on a single region and have to have an all-national character).

Georgian legislators ratified OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and United Nations conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, as well as the Council of Europe’s Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. A parliamentary committee on human rights and a national ombudsperson (also known as the “public defender”) were established to protect minority rights.<sup>41</sup> Shevardnadze appointed regional and district representatives from among the local national groups, and his speeches, which extolled the concept of citizenship, helped diffuse much of the chauvinistic hysteria that dominated the 1992–95 parliament. Undoubtedly, the reality does not reflect legislative ambition, but the political context has changed radically since Gamsakhurdia. Under Shevardnadze, Georgia’s revolution moved from a Jacobin to Girondist stage and, officially at least, from a differentialist emphasis to more of an assimilationist one, or, to put it in Lowell Barrington’s words, from a “sovereignty-protecting nationalism” to a “civic nation-building” nationalism. The language of militant nationalism was expunged from the official lexicon, replaced by concepts of citizenship and minority rights.

Georgian nationalism—if one accepts it is related to the depth and sustainability of mass support—today seems weaker than many European nationalisms. It is quite extraordinary, given the scale of military threats to Georgian national integrity, how restrained Georgians have been regarding

the loss of Abkhazia and South Osetia. This may partly be explained by political fatigue, but even during the war in Abkhazia, few Georgians were willing to risk their lives for a campaign that to many was distant and irrelevant. Most fighters (though not all) were local Georgians from Sukhumi defending their livelihoods and homes. Other local Georgians, who supported ousted President Gamsakhurdia (mostly Mingrelians) refused to fight “Shevardnadze’s” war.

That is not to suggest Georgians are unpatriotic, but the picture is more complex than the analysis proffered in the West—a mass-based conflict motivated and sustained by militant nationalist passions and historical wrongs. The vast majority of Georgians were not engaged in militant nationalist struggles, and if militant nationalism was so pervasive in Georgia, it is surprising that after Georgia’s military defeat Georgians did not rise up against the government that led the country into such catastrophic national humiliation. This needs explanation. One wonders how Americans would have reacted to a comparative loss of U.S. territories and blatant internal interference from a powerful neighboring state. I suspect they would not have shown the Georgians’ coolness.

### Georgian Nationalism: Continuity or Discontinuity?

Georgian nationalism has a long and varied history. To ignore this changeable and often contradictory history, which included at times tolerance for different national groups in the pre-Soviet and Soviet periods, would result in a partial history and make the prognosis for civil peace in Georgia a much dimmer prospect. The interesting question for the researcher into Georgian nationalism is not so much the “continuities” of violence and ethnic conflict but the discontinuities and contradictions. What was it that made the new Georgian state in 1991, supported by the majority of its population, a violent threat to some (again, not all) of its minorities upon the establishment of independence?<sup>42</sup> What made these fairly good neighbors into bad ones over the years 1989–93, when Georgia became embroiled in two wars of secession and a civil war? And what led to the movement away from radical nationalism in the years that followed, as postindependence Georgian nationalism was weakened and transformed?

At least five factors come to mind: the Soviet legacy, the role of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, state disintegration, economic collapse, and Russian intervention. The Soviet legacy is complex, but two issues in particular con-

tributed to the breakdown in national relations. The collapse of the USSR left Georgia with a “multicolored” map, divided into nationally or religiously based territories, each one assigned to a titular group. These were the Abkhazian and Ach’aran Autonomous Republics and the South Osetian Autonomous Region. The territories of these republics and regions were “sacralized,” with their own borders, “national” institutions, popular assemblies, and symbols. Nations were seen as fixed entities despite official rhetoric about their ultimate disappearance. On gaining independence Georgia faced small “domestic states” within its borders, or, as Lowell Barrington puts it, the existence of “overlapping homelands.” Titular nations conceived of these autonomous units as “their own.” The local elites in Abkhazia and South Osetia feared the removal of Russian protection after Georgian independence threatened their political, economic, and cultural privileges as well as their security. The Georgian government of 1990–92, inexperienced and chauvinistic, confirmed their fears.<sup>43</sup>

The Soviet Union also left behind a radical, polarized view of politics, a theatrical cast of heroes and enemies. The pseudopolitics of the Soviet state left the narrowest space for development of a critically engaged public that could experience negotiation, compromise, and process. Leaders, institutions, and the law were seen either as oppressive and corrupt or as conspiring against Georgian interests. The instruments of change would have to come from outside, uncorrupted by the Soviet system. In a time of national crisis, Gamsakhurdia—a former political prisoner, young, religious, son of a great patriot—fit the heroic anti-Communist bill perfectly. At the same time, he was a Soviet product—ideological, intolerant of opposition, conspiratorial, a seeker of enemies within.<sup>44</sup> His populist rhetoric stimulated Georgians’ own anxieties about demographic decline and loss of control in their own republic. Add to this the other three factors mentioned above—the state’s rapid disintegration, economic collapse, and Russian intervention, which deprived the Georgian government of institutional stability and legitimacy, as well as economic resources and control, and offered a strong (Russian) patron to disaffected national minorities—and the pattern of conflict in Georgia in the immediate postindependence years is not surprising. Rather, it is almost inevitable.

Under Shevardnadze, Georgian history was put into service once more, but this time as an example of how Georgia’s nations could live in peace.<sup>45</sup> Militant nationalist organizations such as the National Independence

Party, Merab Kostava Society, and St. Ilya the Righteous Society disappeared from the political scene. The absence of public support for these parties needs explanation. Why did they become marginalized, and why did militant nationalism lose its appeal? First and foremost, the illiberal populism of the Gamsakhurdia leadership was dysfunctional for most Georgians; it brought economic chaos, civil war and disorder, a crisis of identity, regional fragmentation, and isolation from Europe. Put simply, Gamsakhurdia's populist nationalism failed to bring results. The repression of national minorities and civil strife between Georgians was cathartic—it led many Georgians to reassess their image of themselves as united and tolerant and created a nostalgic yearning for the Georgian tradition of multinational cooperation.

The disorder of the Gamsakhurdia era led to accelerated political maturity among Georgians. In his book *The End of History and the Last Man*, Fukuyama projects a “final political neutralization” of nationalism. He argues that as a national group becomes secure in its identity, it will become—like European religions in the past—“defanged and modernized.”<sup>46</sup> While I do not entirely agree with this generalization, a process of deradicalization quickly developed in Georgia, especially after its defeat in the Georgian-Abkhazian war of September 1993 and the civil war that followed. Popular exhaustion with the symbolic hyperbole and infighting of militant nationalist parties led to a widespread desire for stability and more moderate goals. The strong anti-Russian feelings inspired by Gamsakhurdia gave way to a realization that the country's northern neighbor had to be accommodated. As a result, Shevardnadze was initially welcomed as someone who could “deal” with Russia.

Equally important in the deradicalization process was the increasing role of Europe and international organizations in Georgia. Gamsakhurdia's alienation of European and American leaders irritated Georgians who always thought of themselves as Europeans and deserving members of the Western cultural community.<sup>47</sup> Georgians' desire to be European required conformity with European ideas of civil and minority rights and the rule of law and opened them to new and more flexible interpretations of sovereignty (a reassessment of federalism, for example). Official acceptance into the Western community, which followed precipitously on Shevardnadze's return to Georgia in March 1992, also brought recognition of independence, the hope of financial support, and an influx of international non-



governmental organizations (NGOs). Today, there is considerable disillusion with the NGOs, but they helped establish a nongovernmental sector and provided new depoliticized avenues of social activism.

A third strand in the deradicalization process was a shift in the power elite. Gamsakhurdia removed and alienated much of Georgia's traditional cultural, political, and economic elites. In contrast, Shevardnadze's Soviet background and pragmatic approach to administrative needs led to the restoration of Georgia's former nomenklatura—the old regional party secretaries, Komsomol officials, enterprise managers and moderate nationalist intellectuals transformed into governors, entrepreneurs, and presidential advisers. Young pro-European modernizers, often educated abroad and known as the “Mississippdaleulni” (literally, “those who have drunk from the Mississippi”<sup>48</sup>), joined this elite and helped mediate Georgian economic and political life. Direct action, popular participation, and street politics withered away. Shevtsova in her book on the Yeltsin era, suggests the former nomenklatura, enriched and ambitious, is probably “the most solid shield against a return to the Soviet past.”<sup>49</sup> In Georgia, it was also the best guarantee against a return to the militant nationalism of Gamsakhurdia.

Shevardnadze did not abandon nationalism but “reframed” it from a state-seeking activity to a state-building activity.<sup>50</sup> His “institutional” nationalism avoided popular mobilization and aimed to attach both the Georgian nation and national minorities to the state through a redefinition of history and citizenship. When Shevardnadze came to power, Georgia was a state on the verge of collapse. Strong regionalist movements and civil war underlined fundamental disagreements on what constituted “Georgianness,” and disputes over national symbols and history, territorial structures and majority-minority relations, showed nation-building in Georgia, despite its claim to deep roots, was incomplete. Georgians were fighting among themselves over the “national project” as much as they were with non-Georgians. In this context, nationalism became an important focus for unity based on reconciliation, a strong and independent state, a restored self-image of multinational tolerance, and a return to Christian Georgia's traditional alliance with Europe. This “defanged” nationalism is usually accompanied, as Brubaker puts it, by “declining curves of mobilization.”<sup>51</sup> This was the case in Georgia under Shevardnadze.

One cannot, of course, omit history and ethnicity from this analysis, although in the case of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian–South Oset-

ian disputes, both were mainly weapons of choice used to mobilize support. The use of the term *ethnic conflict* is too blunt and unambiguous to describe the conflict between Georgians and their national minorities. It assumes that all stages of the conflict were “ethnic” (focused on cultural, religious, historical, or linguistic differences) and that all members of the opposing groups unanimously supported the objectives and strategies pursued by their leaders.

“Ethnic conflict” simplifies the picture. It ignores the stages of conflict and the saliency of other issues that contribute to collective action and resistance, such as ideology (fear of political and economic change), self-interest (protection of privilege), intragroup differences, and the interests of powerful neighboring states. Violence between national groups can defy all models and predictions, but the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Osetian cases suggest that the “ethnicization” of a dispute is not entirely spontaneous and may follow the mobilization of the population rather than precede it. As Smith has pointed out, conflict and war can produce nations and nationalism as much as the other way round.<sup>52</sup>

In the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Osetian cases, ethnic differences existed, but they were not always the most salient sources of conflict. The conflicts in Georgia began with questions of parliamentary competency, self-government, and territorial status between numerically small elites on either side. With the formation of new state institutions, differences focused on representation, participation, and territorial control. Even Gamsakhurdia did not reject Abkhazian claims to special political and cultural rights; the issue was rather the preservation of Georgian national sovereignty in Abkhazia. But as the conflicts intensified, especially after the outbreak of violence in July 1989 in Abkhazia and in 1990 in South Osetia, the rhetoric of the disputes shifted to “deeper” ethnic issues of cultural and historical incompatibilities and hatreds. The conflict became self-sustaining with each confrontation, reinforcing a sense of injustice, exclusion, and insecurity on all sides. The trigger to mass violence in both cases came with the intrusion of armed outsiders from Tbilisi.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, the link between ethnic conflict and violence in Georgia and elsewhere is the result of three mistaken assumptions: (1) that if the groups are ethnic, then the conflict’s source must be ethnic, (2) that ethnic conflict is an explosion waiting to happen (without an appreciation of the different stages and intensities that precede or accompany the conflict), and (3) that all ethnic conflicts are irrational and therefore likely to end in violence. All

three premises lead us to an uncomplicated emphasis on ethnicity as the sole source of the conflicts in Georgia.

### Conclusion

What did post-Soviet Georgian nationalism look like under Shevardnadze? It was not exclusive, antimodernist, or illiberal (but neither could it be described as entirely inclusive, modernist, or liberal). Defining Georgian nationalism depends on where you look and when. We might draw different conclusions based on when we polled, where we polled, and whom we polled. Focusing on the early 1990s would have given us a very different picture of Georgian nationalism than in the late 1990s. As with other nationalisms, Georgians' "ethnic" passions wax and wane, depending on political and economic circumstances.

Lowell Barrington's five variants provide an excellent model for the numerous patterns of nationalism in post-Soviet states. It helps us understand the difference between the Gamsakhurdia era of "sovereignty-protecting" and Shevardnadze's "civic nation-building." His point that "postindependence nationalists" can pursue many of these variants simultaneously, or that "different nationalist elites may support different nationalist variants," is particularly appropriate in the Georgian case. Four of the five variants—nationalism as sovereignty-protecting, civic nation-building, ethnic nation-protecting, and co-national-protecting—could be used to describe aspects of Georgian nationalism at different stages of its development since independence. The first variant, however—nationalism as external-territory-claiming—though not alien to Georgian nineteenth-century nationalism, was not a significant part of the postindependence nationalist movement

Yet, overall, the issues that dominate Georgian newspapers today are not nationalist ones—though secessionist Abkhazia is a constant feature—but the economy, crime, corruption, and scandal. In a public opinion survey taken in September 1999 by SOCIOGEO, 66 percent declared economic and social problems to be the most serious facing Georgia today, and only 17 percent mentioned ethnic and territorial issues.<sup>54</sup> Alternative militant nationalisms still gain high visibility but are weak. A good example is MP Guram Sharadze's party—Georgia First of All—which has almost no organization but attracts national attention when it demands the retention of nationality in the Georgian passport and takes Jehovah's Witnesses to court

for antistate propaganda.<sup>55</sup> One might cite as more radically nationalist the electoral platforms of the Labor and Socialist parties (or the party Industry Will Save Georgia), which have a strong populist, antiforeign ring to them, in particular on the questions of resistance to International Monetary Fund (IMF) directed economic policies.<sup>56</sup> But these parties received support not because of their nationalist platforms but due to their economic and social programs or because of the personalities of the men leading them.<sup>57</sup>

Just as I would not judge American nationalism by the statements of militia leaders, populist politicians, electoral platforms, or violent shooting incidents, so I would make no assumptions about the importance of militant nationalism in Georgia from reports picked up by Reuters or Associated Press. Many in the Georgian elite continue to voice strong anti-Abkhazian, anti-Osetian, and, less openly, anti-Armenian sentiments, but as Lieven points out in his intelligent dissection of Chechen nationalism, “the world is full of nations which regularly indulge in outbursts of nationalist rhetoric, and still more of elites who use such rhetoric to mask their real and ugly motives for holding onto state power. How many, though, actually have the ability or will to carry out their rhetoric in reality?”<sup>58</sup>

This does not mean Georgian nationalism has no distinctive features but that they are mixed, neither exclusively illiberal nor fully inclusive, a combination of—in Georgia’s case—four of the variants of Lowell Barrington’s model. Georgians share with other nations what Nairn has called nationalism’s “Janus-like face,” looking both backward and forward.<sup>59</sup> Resentful of the impact of globalization, Georgians want to become part of the modern global world; sharing a largely ethnocultural conception of nationhood, they also support pragmatic, multicultural policies, based on a historical self image of national tolerance. Strong believers in national sovereignty, Georgians yearn to become members of the European Union, an organization that promotes integration.

Under the leadership of Gamsakhurdia, and in the context of imperial collapse, Georgian nationalism resembled a combination of the sovereignty-protecting and ethnic nation-protecting features described in Lowell Barrington’s introduction, common among the defensive and exclusionary movements of the late twentieth century tabulated by Eric Hobsbawm in his book *Nations and Nationalism since 1870*.<sup>60</sup> It was revolutionary and integral to Gamsakhurdia’s populist, egalitarian, and anti-establishment policies. But the loss of Abkhazia and South Osetia, regional divisions, civil war, economic collapse, and isolation from the West created

the context for the more constructive, civic nation-building nationalism of Shevardnadze. Under Shevardnadze nationalism became an instrument for stabilizing the state. It was a mechanism for redefining membership of the nation, reintegrating national minorities, establishing consensus and controlling the opposition.

Georgia under Shevardnadze did not become a fully “civic” state where, in theory at least, ethnicity has no relevance to citizenship rights (a rare achievement anywhere in the world). The special role given to the Georgian church in the constitution, the semiofficial persecution of new religious groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the state’s ambivalence as to whether national origin should remain in passports, the reluctance to specify and implement national minority rights in a comprehensive law on national minorities, arguments over the flag, and continued tensions in the regions with national minorities such as the Armenians in Javakheti—all testify to the ethnocultural core of Georgian national identity.

But at the same time, the traditional self-image of Georgia as a tolerant multinational state, while not accepted by many non-Georgians, has become part of Georgians’ own political discussions in the postindependence period. Aspirations to join Europe have stimulated Georgian elites to consider federalism an appropriate territorial division and to incorporate international norms protecting minority rights into their legislation. Ethnic concerns are no longer uppermost in Georgian minds and compete unfavorably with economic and social issues such as employment, health, and corruption. Ethnocultural issues play no significant role in foreign policy. Turkey, for example, although not fully trusted by ordinary Georgians, has been transformed from a Muslim threat into a friendly NATO ally that will help Georgia itself get closer to Europe.

Georgian nationalism, despite European pressures and the new elites’ pragmatism, will not adopt an integrationist civic model, largely because Georgia’s own national minorities find this unacceptable. They want to be treated as separate national groups and preserve a system that Karklins, among others, has termed *ethnopluralism*, a system that recognizes and accommodates national group rights.<sup>61</sup> Georgians’ multinational tradition—historically more significant than the “tradition” of national conflict—is an important base for such a model. But this model’s effectiveness depends on greater state authority (an end to Georgia’s massive corruption is an essential step to achieving this), a stable and friendly regional environment (while Russian intervention persists, reconciliation between

the Abkhazians and Georgians will be difficult), and a reversal of Georgia's social and economic decline.

In short, as I have suggested throughout this essay, Georgia's "ethnic" problems are neither deeply rooted nor "autonomous." They cannot be isolated from a complex mix of Georgian legacies and attitudes or separated from vital economic and social issues. Georgia's legacies are not those of ethnic conflict. The tradition of multinational coexistence has greater longevity. The question is whether this tradition can be successfully incorporated into a new national ideology acceptable to all Georgia's national groups.

### Postscript

This chapter was completed prior to the revolutionary change in November 2003, the peaceful ouster of Eduard Shevardnadze, known as the "Rose Revolution." This peaceful revolution confirms the argument of this essay. Post-Soviet politics in Georgia has become a complex process that cannot be confined within the parameters of ethnonationalism. Georgians' demands in November 2003 led to a dramatic example of how post-Soviet politics—not only in Georgia—has changed in the last decade from simplistic ethnocentric claims to "ordinary" demands for clean government, fair representation, decent economic standards, and better protection of rights. Political authoritarianism is the dominant pattern in the Newly Independent States, but post-Soviet societies are rapidly changing into pluralistic entities that should move Western scholarship beyond its traditional focus on postcommunist "vacuums" and "fundamentalisms."

### NOTES

1. Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (summer 1994): 414–52.

2. Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, "The Dialectics of Nationalism in the USSR," *Problems of Communism* 22, no. 3 (May–June 1974): 1–22; and Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially chapter 2.

3. One in a long line of such commentaries is Robert Kaplan's "Where Europe Vanishes" (*Atlantic Monthly* 286, no. 5 [November 2000]: 67–81), in which he writes, "The story of the Republic of Georgia illustrates that the peoples of the Caucasus may prove as incapable of self-rule as they were resistant to rule by outsiders." See also David Rieff, "Nagorno-Karabagh: Case Study in Ethnic Strife," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 2

(March 1997): 118–32, where Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh are characterized as little less than mad. The article seems to be based on a limited number of interviews.

4. This is not to suggest that these articles are unimportant, only that the study of Caucasia needs to address other issues. To give a bibliography of all the articles published on “ethnic conflict” in Georgia over the last ten years would take up tens of pages, but articles addressing, say, local government, legislative power, the constitution, and political parties could be counted in the tens. For interesting examples of work on ethnic conflict in Caucasia, see Ronald G. Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); Stephan Astourian, “The Nagorno-Karabagh Conflict: Dimensions, Lessons, Prospects,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (fall 1994): 85–109; Bruno Coppieters, ed., *Contested Borders in the Caucasus* (Brussels: VUB University Press, 1996); and Bruno Coppieters, Ghia Nodia, and Yuri Anchabadze, eds., *Georgians and Abkhazian: The Search for a Peace Settlement* (Cologne: Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 1998). For articles on other issues in Georgia over the last five years, see in particular the United Nations Development Program discussion paper series. Papers include Revaz Gachechiladze, “Population Migration in Georgia and Its Socio-Economic Consequences” (no. 1, UNDP, Tbilisi, 1997); Erekle Natadze, “Taxation and the Economic Consequences for Georgia in Transition” (no. 2, UNDP, Tbilisi, 1998); and George Tarkhan-Mouravi, “Poverty in a Transitional Society: Georgia” (no. 6, UNDP, Tbilisi, 1998). On democratization, see Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). See also my “Democracy from Below: Interest Groups in Georgian Society,” *Slavic Review* 59, no. 1 (spring 2000): 42–73.

5. Walker Connor, “A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a . . . ,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1, no. 4 (1978): 379–88.

6. Anthony Smith, *National Identity: Ethnonationalism in Comparative Perspective* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), chapter 4.

7. The list could be enormous. Some of the most prominent include Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism* (London: Fontana Press, 1994); Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neonationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1981); Geoff Ely and Ronald G. Suny, *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*; and John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

8. The complete March 19, 1998, address from Bucharest University, Bucharest, Romania, is available from the State Department Web site at [http://www.state.gov/www/policy\\_remarks/1998/980319\\_talbott\\_bucharest.html](http://www.state.gov/www/policy_remarks/1998/980319_talbott_bucharest.html).

9. This is a reference to the famous quip by Tip O’Neil, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1977 to 1986, that “all politics is local.” I am suggesting that the explanations for political behavior in Caucasia should be as complex as they are in the United States, that much of what we perceive as “national” in Caucasia is also determined by local and regional interests. We need to investigate the devilish details behind the big picture.

10. On the complex links between violence and nationalism, see the articles in Christopher Dandeker, ed., *Nationalism and Violence* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998). For the viewpoint of a Caucasian scholar, see Levon Abrahamian, "Typology of Aggressiveness and National Violence in the Former USSR," in *Divided Europeans: Understanding Ethnicities in Conflict*, ed. Tim Allen and John Eade (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1999), 59–75. Abrahamian does not assume an automatic link between violence and ethnic conflict. He prefers to talk about the different "cultures of violence," a better way of explaining why and in what form violence in the Caucasus occurs.

11. See George Mosse, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press and University Press of New England, 1993), especially chapter 1, "National Anthems: The Nation Militant."

12. John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chapters 16 and 18, crucial chapters on the relationship between nationalism and liberalism, are reprinted in Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay, *The Nationalism Reader* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995), 98–107; and Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1995). See also Ghia Nodia, "Nationhood and Self-Recollection: Ways to Democracy after Communism," in *Towards a New Community: Culture and Politics in Post-Totalitarian Europe*, ed. Peter Duncan and Martyn Rady (Hamburg: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, LIT Verlag, 1993), 53–63; and Michael Lind, "In Defense of Liberal Nationalism," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 3 (May/June 1994): 87–99.

13. Though to talk of a single type of nationalism in the West that we can compare to Georgian nationalism is also simplistic.

14. Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). See chapter 7, "Etre Francais, Cela se Merite: Immigration and the Politics of Citizenship in France," where Brubaker discusses the debate of the mid-1980s in France concerning the right of nonethnically (in particular North African) French residents to acquire citizenship.

15. Stjepan Mestrovic, *The Balkanization of the West: The Confluence of Postmodernism and Postcommunism* (London: Routledge, 1994).

16. In his testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, George J. Tenet, former director of central intelligence, declared: "This new world harbors the residual effects of the Cold War which had frozen many traditional ethnic hatreds and conflicts within the global competition between two superpowers. Over the past 10 years they began to thaw in Africa, the Caucasus, and the Balkans, and we continue to see the results today." See the February 2, 2000, statement by Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "The Worldwide Threat in 2000: Global Realities of Our National Security," *Turkistan Newsletter* 4, no. 34 (February 9, 2000), available at <http://www.turkiye.net/sota/sota.html>. Tenet's suggestion is that nationalism not only is rooted in the past but also occurs only in small and weak states.

17. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*; and Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

18. Mestrovic, *The Balkanization of the West*, 8–10.

19. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 88, and especially chapter 4.



20. On the rise of nationalism in Georgia, see Ronald G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), especially chapters 6–9.

21. Georgian parties did, however, call for greater autonomy. On this period in Georgian history, see Firuz Kazamzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917–1921)* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), chapters 1–3; Ronald G. Suny, “The Emergence of Political Society in Georgia,” in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, rev. ed., ed. Ronald G. Suny (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 109–40; and Stephen Jones, “Georgian Social Democracy in 1917,” in *Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917*, ed. Jonathan Frankel, Edith Rogovin Frankel, and Baruch Knei-Paz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 247–73.

22. On the relationship between nationalism and socialism among non-Russians during the Russian Revolution of 1917, see Stephen Jones, “The Non-Russian Nationalities,” in *Society and Politics in the Russian Revolution*, ed. Robert Service (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 35–63.

23. In the Soviet period, Georgians became fighters against Soviet oppression. Resistance to totalitarianism was identified as a fight for the values and freedoms of Western democracies. Only after the collapse of the USSR did it become clear that dissidents like Zviad Gamsakhurdia were concerned not with human rights more generally but with national rights more specifically. For a balanced assessment of the Georgian dissident movement in the 1970s, see Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious and Human Rights*, trans. Carol Pearce and John Glad (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 106–20. Yet even Alexeyeva does not highlight the tensions between national and human rights in Georgia, already evident in Gamsakhurdia’s writings, but sees them as essentially compatible.

24. Rakowska-Harmstone, “The Dialectics of Nationalism in the USSR.”

25. The nearest the Nazis got to Georgia in their push for Baku’s oil was Nalchik, currently situated in the North Caucasian republic of Kabardino-Balkaria.

26. After 1980, the number of protests in defense of Georgian culture and language increased among students and intellectuals. Although there was general sympathy among Georgians for anti-Russification protests, they did not take to the streets. There were anti-Soviet demonstrations in 1981 and 1983 of up to two thousand (mainly students), but it wasn’t until 1988 that mass demonstrations took place, protesting a proposed railway link between Russia and Georgia crossing the Greater Caucasian Range (see Stephen Jones, “The Caucasian Mountain Railway Project: A Victory for Glasnost?” *Central Asian Survey* 8, no. 2 [1989]: 47–59). On the rise of Georgian nationalism in the 1980s, see Stephen Jones, “Glasnost, Perestroika and the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic,” *Armenian Review* 43, nos. 2–3 (summer/autumn 1990): 127–52.

27. There is little information in English on either of these events. On 1956, see Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*; G. Charachidze, “Les émeutes de Tiflis et leur signification,” *Est et Ouest* 153 (June 1956): 15–17; and Elizabeth Fuller, “Georgia, Stalin and the Demonstrations of 1956,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research* 190, no. 88 (May 3, 1988). On the 1978 events, see Ann Sheehy, “The National Languages and the New Constitutions of the Transcaucasian Republics,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research* 97, no. 78 (May 3, 1978); and, more generally on language issues, Stephen Jones, “The Georgian Language State Program and Its Implications,” *Nationalities Papers* 23, no. 3 (September 1995): 535–48.

28. James Scott and J. Tria Kerkvliet, eds., *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance in South-East Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 1986). See also Stephen Jones, "Old Ghosts and New Chains: Ethnicity and Memory in the Georgian Republic," in *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism*, ed. Rubie Watson (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1994), 149–65.

29. Between 1959 and 1979, the Osetian proportion of the Georgian population decreased from 3.5 to 3.2 percent. This combined with Georgian population gains above their natural growth rate (taking into consideration net migration and mortality rates) leads Anderson and Silver to suggest Georgians assimilated considerable numbers of Osetians during this period (B. A. Anderson and Brian Silver, "Estimating Russification of Ethnic Identity among Non-Russians in the USSR," *Demography* 20, no. 4 [November 1983]: 461–89). This does not mean this was a process accepted by all non-Georgians with equanimity. In the 1970s, there were a number of Abkhazian protests against Georgian demographic gains and perceived pressures to assimilate. See Darell Slider, "Crisis and Response in Soviet Nationality Policy: The Case of Abkhazia," *Central Asian Survey* 4, no. 4 (1985): 51–68.

30. Abkhazians, too, were victims of the clashes in Sukhumi. One of the better works on the manipulation of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict is Chervonnaya, *Conflict in the Caucasus Georgia, Abkhazia, and the Russian Shadow*, trans. Ariane Chanturia (Glastonbury, UK: Gothic Images, 1994).

31. Ghia Nodia, "Political Turmoil in Georgia and the Ethnic Policies of Zviad Gamsakhurdia," in *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. Bruno Coppiters (Concord, MA: Paul and Company Publishers), 73–89.

32. This is a result of my own observation. See also Alexei Zverev, "Ethnic Conflicts in the Caucasus, 1988–1994," in *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, ed. Bruno Coppiters (Concord, MA: Paul and Company Publishers), 40–41, which presents a slightly different explanation for the absence of anti-Abkhazian slogans.

33. According to the 1989 census, the Abkhazians in the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic numbered 93,267, or 17.8 percent (they made up 95,900 in the Georgian republic as a whole). The South Osetians in the South Osetian Autonomous Region (oblast) numbered 65,000 (66 percent), although generally in Georgia they were more numerous at 164,000. For these figures, see Revaz Gachechiladze, *The New Georgia: Space, Society, Politics* (London: UCL Press, 1995), 73–104.

34. Although expulsions did occur among South Osetians and Armenians in Georgia during the war in South Osetia in 1990–91.

35. Nodia, "The Conflict in Abkhazia: National Projects and Political Circumstances," in *Georgians and Abkhazians: The Search for a Peace Settlement*, ed. Bruno Coppiters, Ghia Nodia, Yuri Anchabadze (Cologne: Bundeinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 1998), 30–31.

36. We see a similar sort of differentiation in other states. In Hungary, for example, a law on national and ethnic minorities was passed in 1993 that gave special rights only to those groups that had lived in Hungary for more than a century.

37. Guram Svanidze, "National Minorities in Georgia" (International Centre for Peaceful Caucasus, n.d.), 7.

38. For fuller exposition of these arguments, see Stephen Jones, "Populism in Georgia: The Gamsakhurdia Phenomenon," in *Nationalism and History: The Politics of Nation Building in Post-Soviet Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, ed. Donald Schwarz and Razmik Panossian (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 127–49.

39. I have an unofficial translation of the “Draft Law on National and Ethnic Minorities,” written by G. V. Zhorzholiani and A. Ch. Abashidze. It was considered overly favorable to non-Georgian minorities by many Georgian parliamentarians. The language law, to supplement a language program passed in 1989, is also still under discussion at the time of this writing.

40. In the 1995 elections, four ethnic Armenians, four Azerbaijanis, two Russians, two Greeks, one Osetian, one Jew, and one Kurd were elected as MPs. In 1999, based simply on my identification of MPs by their last names (admittedly highly suspect), the new parliament included six Armenians, six Azerbaijanis, one Russian, two Abkhazians, and one Osetian. There are a total of 235 MPs.

41. The full name of the parliamentary committee dealing with human and minority rights under Shevardnadze was the Committee for Human Rights, Petitions by Citizens, and the Construction of a Civil Society. Four of its fourteen members were national minority representatives. The ombudsperson, or public defender, of Georgia was Nana Devdariani. Because she was a member of the Socialist Party, many parliamentarians felt she was not sufficiently objective to dealing with the rights of national minorities and other dissenting groups.

42. It is important to note that Georgian nationalism in the 1990s did not mean hostility to all resident national minorities. The Greek, Jewish, and, before 1990, South Osetian communities were on good terms with the Georgians. On the other hand, for historical and demographic reasons, the Abkhazians (they numbered ninety thousand and had no external homeland to protect them) and Armenians (the traditional merchant class in Georgia) were viewed by Georgians with greater hostility. Brubaker, in his discussion of Poland as an example of a “nationalizing state” (*Nationalism Reframed*, 79–106), notes similar differentiation. Some national minorities were considered by the Poles to be unassimilable (the Germans and Jews), while others were considered autochthonous and assimilable (the Ukrainians and Belorussians).

43. On the early years of Georgian independence under the leadership of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, see Jonathan Aves, “The Rise and Fall of the Georgian Nationalist Movement, 1987–1991,” in *The Road to Post-Communism: Independent Political Movements in the Former Soviet Union, 1985–1991*, ed. Geoffrey A. Hosking, Jonathan Aves, and Peter Duncan (London: Pinter, 1992); Ghia Nodia, “Georgia’s Identity Crisis,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (January 1995): 104–16; and Stephen Jones, “Georgia: A Failed Democratic Transition,” in *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 288–310.

44. Jones, “Populism in Georgia.” For Gamsakhurdia’s writings, see *Sakartvelos resp’ublik’is p’rezident’i zviad gamsakhurdia* (Tbilisi: Khma erisa, 1995), especially “Mimartva javakhetis somekh mosakhleobas,” 69–71, and “Sakartvelos resp’ublik’is uzenaesi sabch’os tavnjdomaris bat’on Zviad Gamsakhurdias gamosvla,” 82–99, for examples of his view of national minority issues in Georgia. See also 22 *shekhvedra* (Tbilisi: Khma erisa, 1995), a collection of interviews with Gamsakhurdia.

45. See, for example, Eduard Shevardnadze’s “state of the union” address to parliament in May 1997. He declared that Georgia’s “national philosophy must be based on, and take into account, the Georgian state’s multinational population, the specifics of our state, and the many centuries we have experienced of people of different faiths living peacefully side by side.” See “Sakartvelos p’rezident’is eduard shevardnadzis

mokhseneba sakartvelos p'arlament'is 1997 ts'lis 27 maisis skhdomaze," *P'arlament'is uts'q'ebani*, Tbilisi, May 31, 1997.

46. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 266–75.

47. On Georgians' identification with Western Europe, see Ghia Nodia, "The Georgian Perception of the West," in *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Alexei Zverev, and Dmitri Trenin (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 12–43.

48. In the nineteenth century, Georgian intellectuals and reformers who were educated in Russia were known as the "tergdaleulni" or "those who had drunk from the river Terek," the traditional border between Georgia and Russia. The term *Mississippdaleulni* refers to those young Georgians who since independence in 1991 have received an education in the United States and returned with reformist zeal.

49. Lilia Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia: Myths and Reality* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace/Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 282.

50. See Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, chapter 4, where he discusses the nationalism of "nationalizing states" as distinct from the nationalism of state-seeking nations.

51. Rogers Brubaker, "Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism," in *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, ed. John Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 272–306. This is a masterful summary and critique of many of the assumptions we make about nationalism. Reading this article made me reflect on Western assumptions about nationalism in the Caucasus and had a significant influence on this article.

52. Anthony Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1983), xxxii–xxxvi.

53. On the Abkhazian conflict, see Nodia, "The Conflict in Abkhazia"; and Viacheslav Chirikba, "The Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict: In Search for Ways Out," in *Georgians and Abkhazians: The Search for a Peace Settlement*, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Ghia Nodia, and Yuri Anchabadze (Cologne: Bundesinstitut für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien [BIOst], 1998), 14–62.

54. "Georgians Hope for Better Days Ahead," *Opinion Analysis* (Office of Research, Department of State, M-205–99, November 22, 1999).

55. On the court case, see *South Caucasian Human Rights Monitor*, Caucasian Institute for Peace, Development, and Democracy, Tbilisi, series no. 3 (November and December 1999 issues), available at [cipdd@access.sanet.ge](mailto:cipdd@access.sanet.ge). In November 1999, Guram Sharadze took both the Union of Jehovah Witnesses and the Pennsylvania Guard Tower Association to court, claiming they were registered illegally. He demanded a ban on their activities and claimed they were antistate, antinational, and anti-Orthodox (*Akhali taoba*, no. 330 [November 30, 1999], 4, 6).

56. For the manifesto of Industry Will Save Georgia, see "P'olit'ik'uri modzraoba: Mrets'veloba gadaarchens sakartvelos; Dziritali sap'rogramo p'rintsip'ebi," Tbilisi, 1999, especially 4–7. I have a copy of the political platform of the Socialist Party (Socialist'uri part'ia: Dziritali p'rintsip'ebi). It is a draft version given to me by its chairman, Vakht'ang Rcheulishvili. Unfortunately, these platforms are no longer available on the Georgian parliament Web page (<http://www.parliament.ge>). In an interview I conducted with Rcheulishvili in August 1998, he blamed Shevardnadze for poor Georgian-Russian relations and subservience to the IMF. Rcheulishvili advocates a "semiprotect-

tionist” industrial policy for Georgia and a fairer redistribution of wealth. The Socialist Party and Industry Will Save Georgia both stress active government intervention in the economy, a more egalitarian wages policy, better employment, and an immediate improvement in living standards.

57. In the 1999 parliamentary elections, only three parties managed to surmount the 7 percent barrier required for party representation based on the proportional system—the Citizens Union of Georgia (41.75 percent), Industry Will Save Georgia (7.04 percent), and Revival of Georgia (25.18 percent). However, members of the Labor and Socialist parties were elected from individual constituencies. There were twelve members of the Socialist faction in the 1999–2003 parliament, although only two members of the Labor Party were elected. The Labor and Socialist parties were much more successful in the local elections of November 1998, when they captured a number of Georgia’s major cities. For official results of the October 1999 national parliamentary elections, see *Sakartvelos tsent’raluri saarchevno k’omisia: Sakartvelos p’arlament’is 1999 ts’lis 31 ok’r’ombris archevnebis shedegebis shemajamebeli okmi*, Tbilisi, November 9, 1999.

58. Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 7.

59. Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, 329–63.

60. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870*, especially chapter 6.

61. Rasma Karklins, “Ethnopluralism: Panacea for East Central Europe?” *Nationalities Papers* 28, no. 2 (2000): 219–41.