

# Autonomy as a source of conflict

IREn5019 No War, No Peace: Frozen Conflicts in the Caucasus  
Mgr. Zinaida Bechná, Ph.D.

# Structure

- The Caucasus:
  - The Geographical settings
  - Museum of peoples
  - The crossroad of religions
  - Languages
- Historical overview
- Soviet ethnofederalism
- Democratic transformation and conflict

# The Caucasus

- Large mountainous zone,
- Small republics of the huge Soviet Union,
- Conflict countries from headline news.





# The Caucasus



# The Caucasus

- “The new world disorder”
- 8 conflicts: N-K, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, the Prigorodniy Rayon of North Ossetia and Chechnya – hundred thousand deaths, two million six hundred thousand refugees and Internally Displaces Persons.
- Ethnic based autonomous regions of Soviet era
-

# Geographical settings in the Caucasus

- Northern border: Krasnodar and Stavropol Krai, Russian mainland begins.
- Western border: eastern border of Ottoman empire.
- Southern border: Araxes river, Iran's northern border.
- Political map: three states- Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia plus North Caucasus, part of RF.
- 400, 000km<sup>2</sup> over 20 million people.
- North Caucasus and South or Trans-Caucasia (from Russian Zakavkaz) terms.

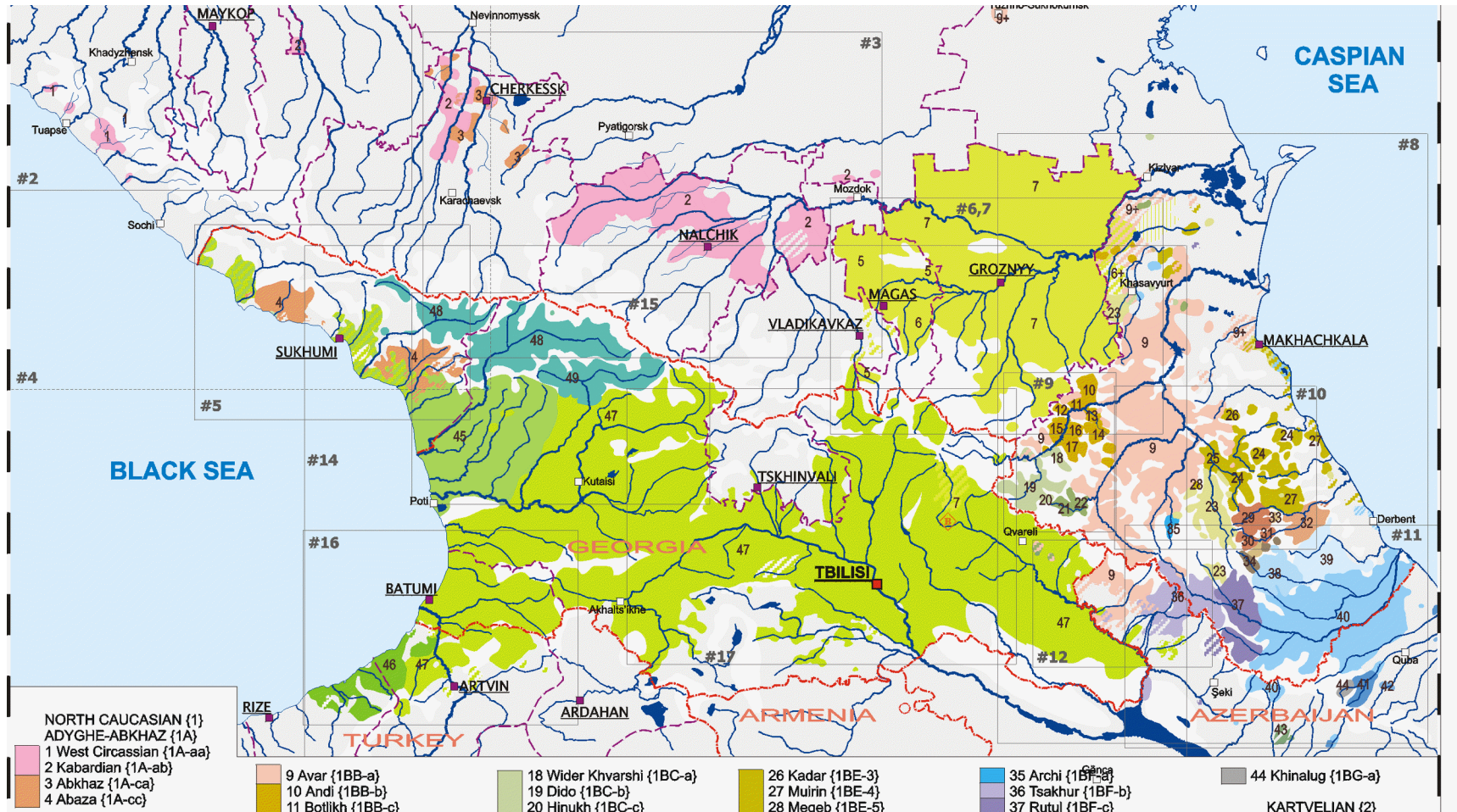
# Museum of peoples

- The North Caucasus: two groups
- 1. indigenous Caucasian peoples, the Vainakh peoples composed of Chechens, Ingush and Tsova-Tush and Daegstani peoples composed of Avars, Lezgins, Dargins and Laks and the Abkhaz and Circassian peoples.
- 2. Turkic and Iranian settlers, Ossetians and Tats.



# Ethnolinguistic Groups in the Caucasus Region



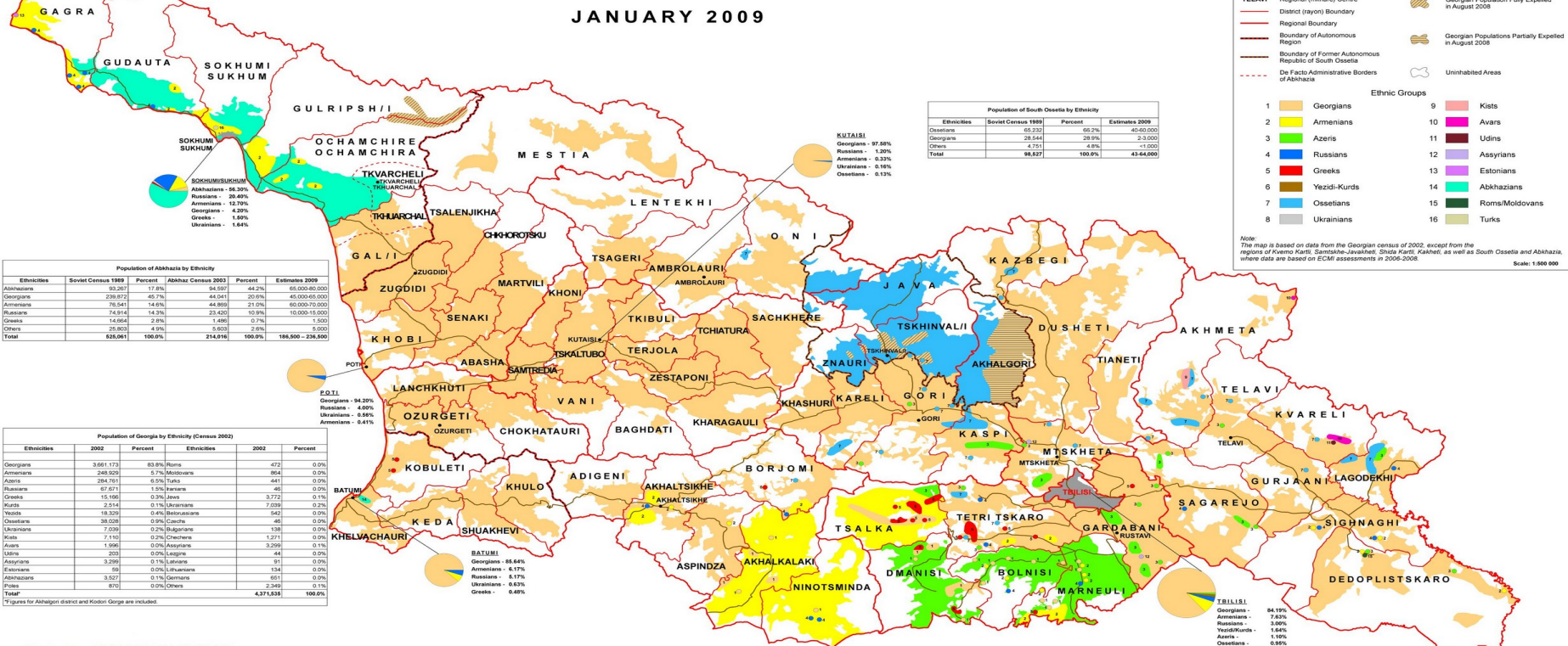


# The museum of people



# ETHNIC MAP OF GEORGIA

JANUARY 2009



Ethnicities	Soviet Census 1989	Percent	Estimate 2008
Ossetians	65,232	66.2%	42,500,000
Georgians	28,544	28.9%	2,3,000
Chech	4,751	4.8%	11,000
Total	98,527	100.0%	43,84,000

Ethnicities	Soviet Census 1989	Percent	Abkhaz Census 2003	Percent	Estimate 2009
Abkhazians	93,267	17.8%	94,597	44.2%	65,000-80,000
Georgians	239,872	45.7%	44,041	20.9%	45,000-65,000
Armenians	78,541	14.6%	44,808	21.0%	60,000-70,000
Russians	74,914	14.3%	23,420	10.9%	10,000-15,000
Germans	14,664	2.8%	7,488	3.5%	1,500
Others	25,903	4.9%	5,803	2.6%	5,000
Total	525,061	100.0%	214,916	100.0%	186,500 - 236,500

Ethnicities	2002	Percent	Ethnicities	2002	Percent
Georgians	3,961,173	83.8%	Roms	472	0.0%
Armenians	248,929	5.7%	Moldovans	864	0.0%
Azars	284,761	0.9%	Turks	441	0.0%
Russians	67,673	1.5%	Ossetians	46	0.1%
Greeks	15,166	0.3%	Jews	3,772	0.1%
Ukrains	2,514	0.1%	Abkhazians	7,039	0.2%
Yezidi	18,329	0.4%	Abkhazians	642	0.0%
Ossetians	39,028	0.9%	Chech	46	0.0%
Ukrainians	7,039	0.2%	Abkhazians	1,38	0.0%
Kists	7,110	0.2%	Chechens	1,271	0.0%
Azars	3,966	0.0%	Assyrians	3,299	0.1%
Udins	203	0.0%	Lezghs	44	0.0%
Assyrians	3,299	0.1%	Udins	91	0.0%
Estons	69	0.0%	Ukrainians	134	0.0%
Abkhazians	3,527	0.1%	Germans	651	0.0%
Poles	870	0.0%	Others	3,249	0.1%
Total*				4,374,835	100.0%

**TBILISI** Capital

**GORI** District (rayon)

**TELAVI** Regional (mkhane) Centre

— District (rayon) Boundary

— Regional Boundary

— Boundary of Autonomous Region

— Boundary of Former Autonomous Republic of South Ossetia

- - - De Facto Administrative Borders of Abkhaz

— Road

Georgian Population Fully Expelled in August 2008

Georgian Populations Partially Expelled in August 2008

Uninhabited Areas

- Ethnic Groups**
- 1 Georgians
  - 2 Armenians
  - 3 Azeris
  - 4 Russians
  - 5 Greeks
  - 6 Yezidi-Kurds
  - 7 Ossetians
  - 8 Ukrainians
  - 9 Kists
  - 10 Avars
  - 11 Udins
  - 12 Assyrians
  - 13 Estonians
  - 14 Abkhazians
  - 15 Roma/Moldovans
  - 16 Turks

Note: The map is based on data from the Georgian census of 2002, except from the regions of Kvemo Kartli, Samegrelo-Zavkheti, Guria, Imereti, Kakheti, as well as South Ossetia and Abkhaz, where data are based on ECMI assessments in 2004-2008.

Scale: 1:500,000

**Map 3: Ethnic Settlement Patterns in Armenia and Azerbaijan, 1989**



# The crossroad of religions

- Islam both Shi'i and Ja'fari Shi'i Islam – majority of Azeris.
- Sunni tradition in Dagestan. Hanafi school in Chechnya and Ingushetia, the Turkic Karachais and Balkars, the Ajars of Georgia and minority of Azeris (15-25%), minority of Ossetians (20-30%) and Abkhazians (35%).
- Judaism: Georgian Jews, Tays and Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan and Dagestan.

# The crossroad of religions

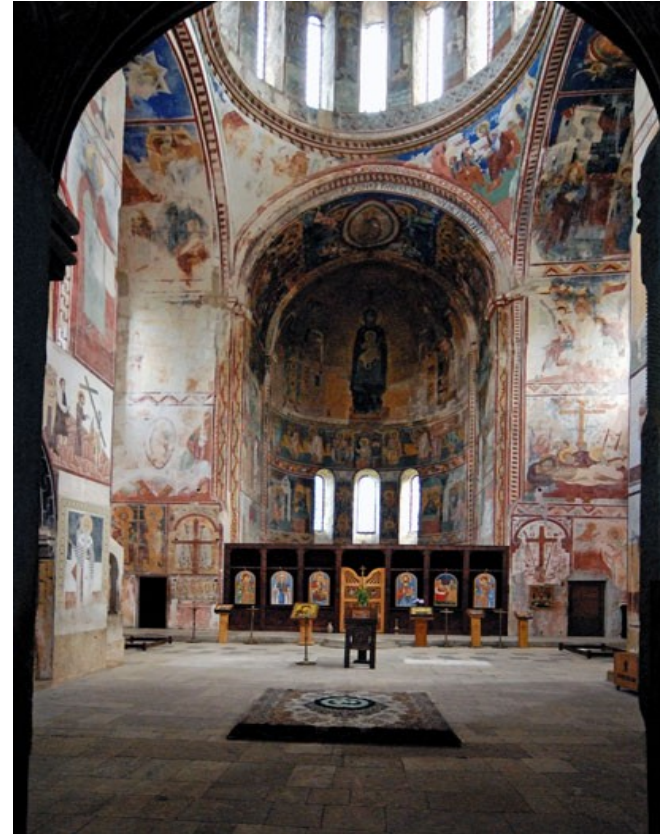
**Azerbaijan - a nation with a Turkic and majority-Muslim population.**



**The Armenian Apostolic Church**



# Georgia – Orthodox Christianity



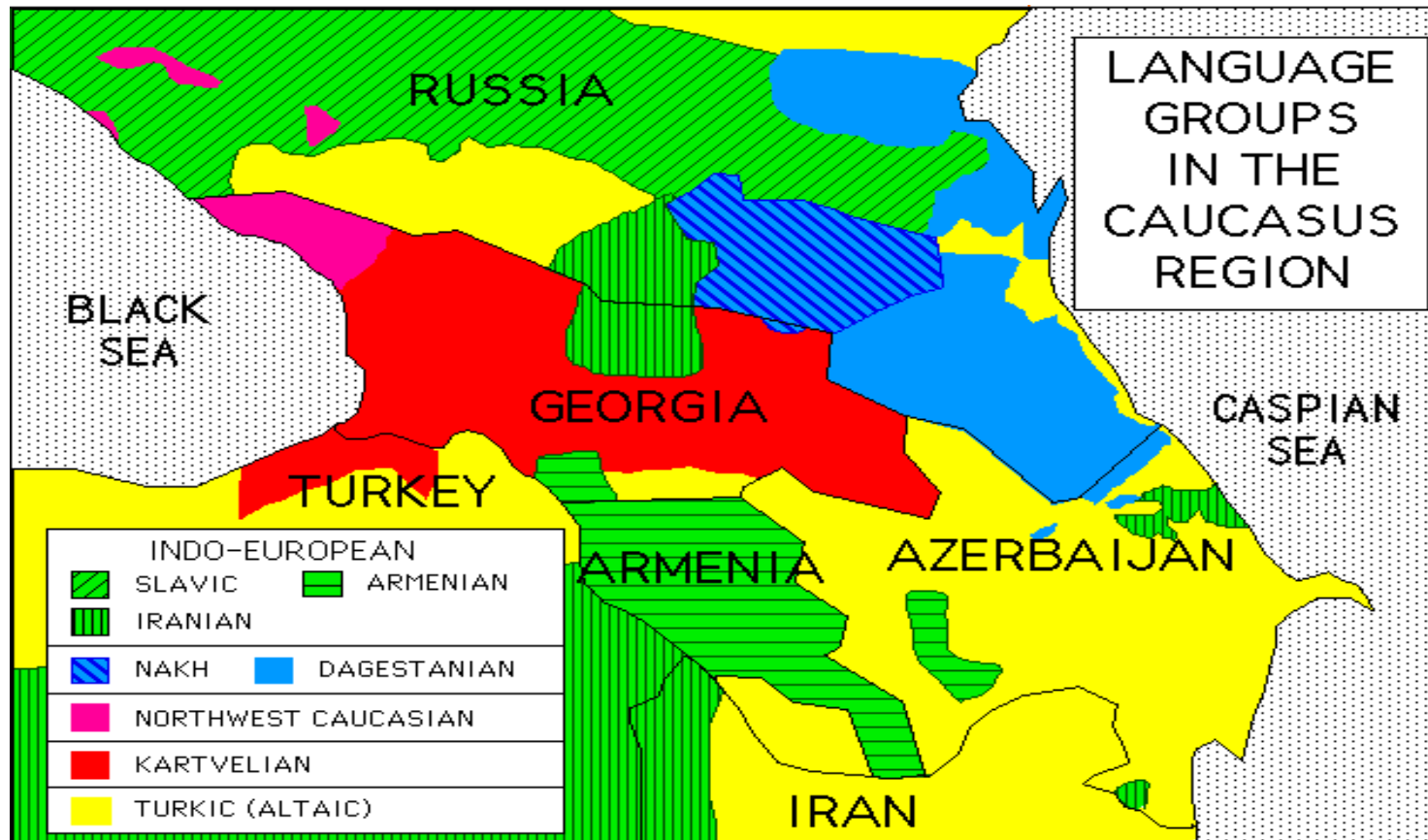




This photo is a property of its author! [www.boke.ge](http://www.boke.ge)



# Languages



# Languages

## The Georgian alphabet

ა	ბ	გ	დ
A	B	G	D
ე	ვ	ზ	თ
E	V	Z	E
ი	კ	ლ	მ
I	K	L	M
ნ	ო	პ	ჟ
N	O	P	J
რ	ს	ტ	ც
R	S	T	C
უ	ფ	კ	ქ
U	F	K	X
ღ	ყ	შ	ჩ
GH	Q	SH	CH
ც	ძ	წ	ჭ
TS	DZ	TS	CH
ხ	ჯ	რ	ჰ
X	J	R	H
ჟ	ფ	გ	ბ
H	F	SH	E

## The Armenian alphabet

THE ARMENIAN ALPHABET					
Ա	ա	aip	Մ	մ	men
Բ	բ	pen	Յ	յ	he
Գ	գ	kim	Զ	զ	noo
Դ	դ	tah	Շ	շ	shah
Ե	ե	yech	Ո	ո	vo
Զ	զ	zah	Պ	պ	chah
Է	է	ai	Պ	պ	bay
Ը	ը	yet	Պ	պ	chay
Թ	թ	to	Պ	պ	rrah
Պ	թ	zhay	Ս	ս	say
Ղ	ղ	ini	Վ	վ	vev
Ճ	լ	lune	Տ	տ	dune
Լ	լ	kh	Ր	ր	ray
Խ	խ	dzah	Տ	ց	tso
Վ	վ	ghen	Ն	ն	hune
Յ	հ	ho	Փ	փ	pure
Զ	ձ	tsah	Փ	փ	kay
Է	ղ	ghad	Օ	օ	o
Ը	յ	jay	Ֆ	ֆ	fay

## Changes in the Azerbaijani Alphabet Sequence in the 20th Century

Arabic 7th century - 1929		Early Latin 1929 - 1939		Cyrillic 1939 - 1991		New Latin since 1991	
English equivalency	Letter	English equivalency	Letter	English equivalency	Letter	English equivalency	Letter
a <sup>-ar</sup>	آ	a	Aa	a	Аа	a	Aa
b	ب	b	Bb	b	Бб	b	Bb
p	پ	ch	Cc	v	Вв	j	Cc
t	ت	j	Çç	q	Гг	ch	Cç
s	س	d	Dd	gh	Гғ	d	Dd
i	ی	e	Ee	d	Дд	e	Ee
ch	چ	ae	Әә	e	Ее	ae	Әә
h	ه	f	Ff	ae	Әә	f	Ff
kh	کھ	g	Gg	zh	Жж	g	Gg
d	د	gh	Ғғ	z	Зз	gh	Ғғ
z	ز	h	Hh	i <sup>-big</sup>	Ии	h	Hh
r	ر	i <sup>-inc</sup>	Ии	i <sup>-Mann</sup>	Ыы	kh	Xx
z	ز	i <sup>-Mann</sup>	Ыы	y	Јј	i <sup>-Mann</sup>	Ии
zh	ژ	y	Jj	k	Кк	i <sup>-big</sup>	Ии
s	س	k	Kk	g	Кк	zh	Jj
sh	ش	l	Ll	l	Лл	k	Kk
s	س	m	Mm	m	Мм	q	Qq
z	ز	n	Nn	n	Нн	l	Ll
t	ت	o <sup>-role</sup>	Oo	o <sup>-role</sup>	Оо	m	Mm
z	ز	o <sup>-world</sup>	Өө	o <sup>-world</sup>	Өө	n	Nn
ae <sup>-cat</sup>	آء	p	Pp	p	Пп	o <sup>-role</sup>	Оо
gh	غ	q	Qq	r	Рр	o <sup>-world</sup>	Оо
f	ف	r	Rr	s	Сс	p	Pp
q	ق	s	Ss	t	Тт	r	Rr
k	ک	sh	Şş	u <sup>-put</sup>	Уу	s	Ss
g	گ	t	Tt	u <sup>-tube</sup>	Уу	sh	Şş
ng	نگ	u <sup>-put</sup>	Uu	f	Фф	t	Tt
l	ل	u <sup>-tube</sup>	Уу	kh	Хх	u <sup>-put</sup>	Уу
m	م	v	Vv	h	Һһ	u <sup>-tube</sup>	Уу
n	ن	kh	Xx	ch	Чч	v	Vv
o	و	z	Zz	j	ҶҶ	y	Yy
h	ه	zh	Zz	sh	Шш	z	Zz
y, i	ی		*		*		-

# Early history

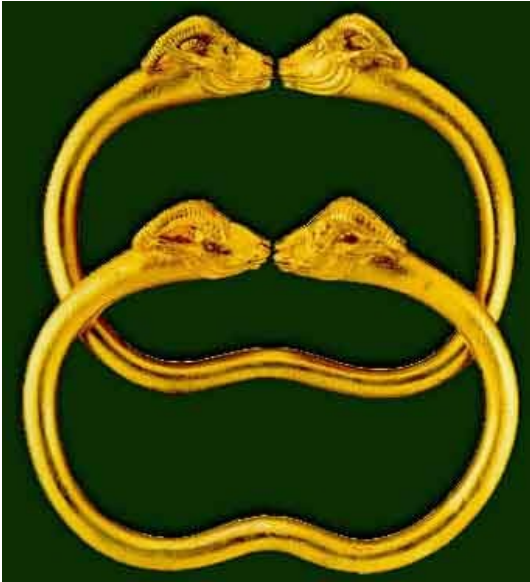
- The advanced economy and favorable geographic and natural conditions of the area attracted the Byzantine, Persian, Mongol, Ottoman and Russian empires.
- Ancient countries of Caucasus: Armenia, Iberia, Colchis and Albania.



## Culture

The area was home to the well-developed bronze culture known as the Colchian culture.

Golden bracelets, c 5-4 centuries BC.



# Historical Overview

The Caucasus: civilizations and regions met, bridge and barrier for communication between north and south.

- The Caucasus is the point where Russia, Iran and Turkey meet. For most of the 19th century, the three powers dueled for dominance of the region.
- Russia – main force which determined the development in the South Caucasus region for more than two centuries.

# Russia's interests

- Trade interests,
- Colonization intentions and
- Strategic considerations.
  
- In dealing with the Caucasus people Russia followed these guidelines:
  1. Refrain from anything that could weaken their perception of our power.
  2. Establish commercial relations so as to generate among them needs that they still do not feel.
  3. Maintain continuous state of dissension among their diverse nations and never forget that their unity could be fatal for us.
  4. Introduce among them the light of Christianity.
  5. Absolutely prevent them from the possibility of links with Turkey and Persia.
  
- Peter the Great - to transform Russia to a great European power.



# Historical overview

- Georgia under Russian control since 1783, Chechnya and Dagestan since 1859.
- In 1801 the Georgian protectorate - Georgia's annexation to Russia.
- Russian attempts to control over the region led to the conquest of a number of Khanates in 1806-1809 and ultimately to the first Russia-Persian war 1812-1813.
- The treaty of Gulistan 1813.
- The treaty of Turkmanchai in 1828 -Russia successfully achieved its control over the Caucasus.
- 1921-1991 Soviet period.



# Historical overview

- During the latter part of the 19th century and for most of the Soviet period, the Soviet position in the Caucasus ran along the frontier with Turkey and Persia (later Iran).
- During the Russian revolution 1917 -Transcaucasian Federation was born (the Georgian Mensheviks, the Azerbaijan Musavat party and the Dashnaks).
- The South Caucasus separated from Russia and declare its independence in 1918. In 1918 three democratic republic were declared, Azerbaijan and Georgian and Armenian Democratic Republics.

# Historical overview

- By 31.05.1920, Azerbaijan was invaded by Sovietized by Russia's 11<sup>th</sup> Red Army.
- Four months later, Armenia was invaded by the Kemalist Army of Karabekir Pasa and partitioned between Turkey and Russia.
- The Soviet military campaign against Georgia was launched on February 11th, 1921.
- The region was the part of the Soviet union for 70years.

# THE CAUCASUS



# Leninist nationality policy



Leninist “nationality policy”- hierarchical nationality-based territorial structure  
→ ethnic identities through a federal state structure.

Stalin wanted to pit the ethnic groups in the the Caucasus regions against each other.  
„Divide and rule“ principle

# Soviet ethnofederalism

- Central in content, federal in form.
- The communist party – main instrument to rule.
- The new Soviet states was an asymmetrical federation – ethnoterritorial units.
- Union republics – Soviet Socialist Republics, SSRs (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia)
- Autonomous republics – Autonomous Soviet Socialist republics, ASSRs (South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Ajaria, Nakhichevan)
- Autonomous oblast – autonomous regions, AOs. (Nagorno-Karabakh)
- Autonomous okrugs.

# Soviet ethnofederalism

- Minorities – assimilation, oppression procedures by a state.
- Advocate autonomy or secession.
- Korenizatsiia – the autonomous structures had no actual autonomy or political power, actual power in Moscow.
- Borders- non-contiguous territories, ethnic communities divided not in correspondence to the demographic realities.
- Soviet past – never resulted into self-determination - autonomy becomes risky.
- Secession or confederation.



# Democratic transition

- Conflict is more likely under following conditions:
  - a transition toward democracy that is incomplete;
  - where **institutions are too weak** to manage the upsurge in the political power of newly enfranchised masses;
  - where the elites use nationalist card in attempt to preserve in power.

# Democratic transition

- Regime types most likely to experience ethnic war in a **mixed regime**, one that is partly democratic and partly autocratic, with poorly developed state institutions – serious institutional deficit.
- **Weak institutions** per se do not increase the chance of the war; they do so only during the **early phase of an incomplete democratic transition**. In this case political leaders frequently turn to ideological or charismatic appeals to bolster the rule.

# Political transformation

- Although some democratic transition is risky, there is no alternative
- political change cannot be frozen.

# Democratization

- Why do citizens in well-established democratic systems vote for government that rarely wage upon each other, while electorates in transitional democracies so often support aggressively nationalist policies, even against democracies?
- Three main lines of explanation:
  - 1. Institutions
  - 2. Norms
  - 3. Information.
-

# 1. Institutions

- Effective democratic institutions make the government accountable, through regular elections, to the average voter who bears the costs and risks of war. Democracies choose their wars more wisely;
- tend to win and suffer fewer casualties
- are less likely to initiate crises
- tend to prevail in the crises that they do initiate;
- rarely fight preventive wars;
- are more astute than their non-democratic counterparts.
- Mixed regimes have won only 58% of the wars they have started, as compared to 93% for democracies and 60% for dictatorship.

## 2. Norms and Identities

- Share democratic liberal identity and common norms that govern appropriate political behavior.
- Country should have deeply ingrained civic norms such as rule by consent the governed, free speech, due processes of law, fair electoral competition, and the settlement of political disputes by peaceful means.
- States in the midst of democratic transition are the most war-prone type of regime , more than authoritarian states, which should be even less constrained by norms.
- In a mature democracy, norms and institutions are mutually supportive. Fair elections, the rule of law, and other building blocks of democracy dependent both on institutions and on norms – that is, standards for what behavior ought to be. People believe, moral obligation, - democracy – the only way to be effective.

### 3. Information and credibility in bargaining

- Greater transparency of democratic politics makes it less likely that democratic leaders will bluff or renege on agreements.
- With two parties transparency about the expected costs and benefits of fighting, there should be little guesswork about which side has the greater resolve, and a bargain can be struck that avoids the costs of fighting it out.
- Transparency and smart bargaining should lead to a peaceful settlement.

?

- Do all regime transitions, whether democratizing or not, increase the risk of war?
- Why should transition toward democracy exert a stronger effect than other kinds of transitions?



# Democratic transition

- Instability of the political elite, which may be characteristic of various kinds of transitions, combines with the expansion of mass political participation in democratizing states in distinctively explosive ways.
- This situation creates strong incentives for elites to mobilize popular support through nationalist appeals, which tend to raise the risk of war.

# Democratic transition

1. Countries undergoing incomplete democratization with **weak institutions** are more likely than other states to become involved in war.
2. Countries undergoing **incomplete democratization** are more likely than other states to initiate war.
3. Incomplete democratization where institutions are weak is especially likely to lead to war when powerful elites feel threatened by the prospect of a democratic transitions.

?

- Do increases in ethnic tensions coincide with democratization? Are the differences in ethnic unrest among democracies due to variations in political institutions?
- Are presidential systems more prone to ethnic conflict than parliamentary democracies? Does the electoral system matter? Does federalism cause more problems than it solves?

# Political system

Nature of the executive, type of electoral system and distribution of power.

*Presidentialism vs. Parliamentarism*

- Ethnic conflict is more likely in Parl. than in Pres. system

*Electoral system*

Plurality system causes ethnic conflict

*Federalism*

Depends of the size of ethnic group

# Political conflict

- Causal chain of political conflict is following:
  - Political system of the state is going through a transformation state. Most dangerous time for bad government is during the period when it tries to transform itself.

# Causal mechanism

- The conflict becomes violent through following mechanism:
  - The lack of elite legitimacy results in discriminatory and weak political institution leading to instability.
  - When authoritarianism collapses and is followed by ineffectual efforts to establish democracy, the interim period of relative anarchy is ripe leadership confrontation.
  - Countries that have undergone a recent political transition are more likely to experience violent conflict.

# Conclusion

- The bigger is the decline of state power the more significant are the incentives of the elites to provoke ethnic conflict as a strategy to maintain in power.
- The more some groups are excluded from state power, the greater is the risk of ethnic tensions.
- The likelihood of ethnic war in semi-democracies remains higher than in other regime types, even after a regime change.