

*THE BALKANS AND CAUCASUS*  
*Parallel processes on the opposite sides of the Black Sea.*  
*Past, present, and prospects.*

Abstracts

*Parallels and Intersections. “Outsiders” and “Insiders”:  
the Great Powers and the Black Sea Area*

Keith HITCHINS, Professor of History, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA:

*Shared Challenges: The Principality of Wallachia and the Kingdom of Georgia at the Threshold of the Modern Age (1774-1812)*

This paper proposes to investigate the destiny of two small countries on either side of the Black Sea, specifically, how they were able to survive the aggressive policies of more powerful neighbors between the latter decades of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth. The two countries, the Principality of Wallachia during the reigns of Alexandru Ipsilanti (1774-1782, 1796) and Constantin Ipsilanti (1802-1806, 1806-1807) and the Kingdom of Georgia during the reign of Erekle II (King of Kakheti, 1744-1762; King of Kartli-Kakheti, 1762-1798), occupied similar positions in international relations, as both were in a state of dependence on large powers and both struggled to maintain their autonomy. Wallachia was a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire and Georgia was claimed as a province by Persia and the Ottoman Empire, and both looked to Russia to serve as a counterweight. The foreign policies pursued by the princes of Wallachia and the King of Georgia offer valuable insights into the balance of power between large and small states in an era of weakening Ottoman and Persian suzerainties and the growing assertiveness of Russia in both the Balkans and the Caucasus. My comparison of Wallachia and Georgia is not solely about their international status. I also examine the domestic policies of the Ipsilantis and Erekle II in order to show how they tried to modernize their states, improve the economy, concentrate authority in their own hands at the expense of the local nobility, and establish useful links with Europe under conditions of almost constant pressure from the outside. It will, of course, be necessary to describe the two countries' political systems, economic conditions, and social structures in order to judge the degree of similarity in their responses to international and internal challenges. Here are rich sources for comparison that will shed much light on the beginnings of the modern age in both Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus. The materials I plan to use are published diplomatic and other official papers, memoirs and other contemporary accounts, and secondary works in Romanian, Georgian, Russian, Turkish, Persian, and Western European languages.

Constantinos PREVELAKIS, Researcher, Centre National de l'Enseignement à Distance, Paris:

*Allied Projects for an Eastern Front and the Illusion of an Oriental Commonwealth - The Eve of World War II (1938-1940) as a Case Study for the Geopolitics of the Balkan and the Caucasus*

During the crucial period covering the failure of the European collective security and the phony war (November 1938 – May 1940), the Balkan, the Caucasus and the Black Sea region have been at the crossroads of European rivalries and regional contradictions. On the one hand, Allied powers - and primarily France - saw the whole area as the ideal base for the launching of an “Eastern front” that would hit Germany and its allies (including USSR after the non-aggression pact of August 1939) on their weakest frontiers. This strategic vision, which included both the Balkans and the Caucasus in a wide “Orient”, led Paris (and to some extent London) to consider simultaneous action plans in the Balkans, on the Turkish straits, the Black Sea, the Danube and the Soviet Caucasus, as parts of a general oriental action of diversion in the war against the Axis.

On the other hand, the European rivalries led the regional elites (especially in the Balkans and Turkey) to consider this area as a broad buffer-zone between the great powers and a potential victim of the clashes among them. In order to avoid this fate and to keep alive a certain balance of powers, plans were drawn for a diplomatic and political integration of the area, such as the Balkan Entente (whose ultimate target was to evolve into a Balkan federation), or a Black Sea Pact, that would associate all powers (great and small) concerned by the stability of the region.

Based on my Ph.D., my contribution will present these trends and will consider this period as a case study of long-term tendencies of the geopolitics of the region. A particular attention will be given to the way in which both great powers and small states of the region have been seeing the area as a great buffer zone of strategic importance for the European stability.

Discussions

Ozan ARSLAN, Lecturer, Department of International Relations and the European Union, Izmir University of Economics, Turkey:

*Turkish Foreign Policy's Historical Perspectives Towards the Northern Balkans and Transcaucasus Areas: A Comparison of the late Ottoman and Republican approaches in the wider Black Sea region*

The Ottoman Empire and its successor in Anatolia, the Republic of Turkey, has always been a major actor in the Black Sea-Caspian Rim. The Transcaucasian isthmus and the Northern Balkans, two multi-ethnic borderlands between the Ottoman and Russian empires between the 17th and early 19th centuries, eventually became the home of several modern nation-states such as Romania, Bulgaria or Georgia, albeit at the end of different historical processes.

The declining Ottoman Empire tried to respond to the first phases of this political reshaping of the Black Sea rim by military means, but at the end of a series of consecutive defeats at the hands of the Romanov Empire and of Balkan powers, during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78, the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, and the first years of WWI on the Caucasian front, the Sublime Porte started to reorient its foreign policy towards the Black Sea rim in favor of the full political independence and consolidation of the “buffer states” between the Anatolian peninsula and the Russian mainland.

Interestingly, the Turkish republic founded in 1923 following the Ottoman defeat in WWI and the subsequent Entente occupation of Eastern Thrace and Anatolia, paid utmost attention to build cordial relations with all the Balkan powers during the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s and, following the end of the special circumstances of the Cold War era, Ankara rushed to re-establish them with the former Warsaw Pact members Bulgaria and Romania. After a long period of almost no official interaction with the Soviet Transcaucasian republics in a bi-polarized world, Turkey started to pursue a similarly very active foreign policy by the early 1990s also in the southeastern rim of the Black Sea.

This research paper will underline - in the light of late Ottoman and foreign primary sources, such as the diplomatic and military archives and memoirs of several politicians and diplomats, as well as of the contemporary Turkish initiatives of foreign policy-making – the similarities and the continuity of Turkish diplomacy – late Ottoman and republican - towards the western and eastern shores of the Black Sea.

*Shadows of the Past and Spiritual Cross-currents*

Dmitrii SIDOROV, Associate Professor,  
Department of Geography, California State University, Long Beach, USA:

*Russian Geopolitical Imagining of a pan-Orthodox Empire: Translatio Imperii, Third Romes, and Post-Byzantine Space*

Shortly after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, a Russian Orthodox monk nominated Russia as the ‘Third Rome’, or successor to the Roman and Byzantine empires based on the *translatio imperii* idea that Christian empires could be inherited or translated geographically. Although often seen later as the Russian Orthodox geopolitical Manifest Destiny, throughout history this ideology had several understudied versions, ranging from isolationism to expansionism.

This paper attempts to further explore the diversity of interpretations of the major geopolitical dictum coming from Russian Orthodoxy, and will focus in particular on a third version, that could be called post-Byzantine because of its focus on the predominantly Christian Orthodox areas around the Black Sea. In this geopolitical worldview, Russia and the Balkans are perceived as constituting the Orthodox world, ‘post-Byzantine space’ different from the neighboring western and Islamic civilizations.

The collapse of the Soviet empire has again revitalized this line of geopolitical imagination, that sees intensified struggle for the post-Byzantine space (that seemingly corresponds geographically to the territory of the All-Slavic union of the early Panславists) between the interests of Orthodox, Latin (Western) and Islamic civilizations. As the major contemporary proponent of this neo-Byzantine ideology, politician and academician Narochnitskaia claims, “... the common/shared goal of western powers in the past and nowadays is the same -- to prevent in the strategic region of the straights and the Mediterranean the formation of a large Slavic Orthodox state with a clearly distinctive independent national spirit.” In the end, the ultimate question remains if the imagined Post-Byzantine empire after the collapse of the USSR is expansionist or isolationist.

Roland CLARK, PhD candidate, Department of History, University of Pittsburgh USA:

*Regional Cooperation According to Interwar Romanian Nationalists*

For most nationalists in interwar Romania, “internationalism” was a very pejorative word. They associated it with images of French expansionism, the League of Nations, and domination by Freemasons and Jews. Despite violently rejecting the “Europe-ism” promoted by Liberal politicians and intellectuals, many nationalists spoke fondly about other forms of international cooperation which resonated with their understandings of how the world worked. Nationalist models of international cooperation generally rejected a “European” approach in favor of regional alliances based on Orthodox traditions of autocephaly, on shared cultures and histories, or on common economic quandaries. In its conservatism, ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, and religious rhetoric, this way of thinking shared a number of similarities with the *Abendland* school in Germany, but unlike the Germans, these thinkers imagined a Balkan, or occasionally a Danubian, community rather than one based on German heritage and culture.

This paper examines a variety of models of regional cooperation promoted by Romanian nationalists during the interwar period. It argues that multi-national empires or supra-national organizations were not the only options available to Europeans seeking to create ties between nation states. Instead, the paper explores how fascists such as A. C. Cuza and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu thought about European cooperation in ideological terms. It shows how aware nationalists such as Mihail Manoilescu were of their country’s economic marginalization vis-à-vis Europe and explains the importance of macro-economics in shaping nationalist thinking about internationalism. Finally, through a discussion of regional models promoted by Nichifor Crainic and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, the paper demonstrates that as Orthodox Christians rooted in traditions of autocephaly shaped by centuries of Ottoman rule, some Romanians conceived of nations and therefore of internationalism through political metaphors that were very different from those popular in Western Europe.

Yuri STOYANOV, Department of the Near and Middle East, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Senior Associate Fellow, The Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem:

*The Formation of Sectarian Identities in the Religious Interchange between the Balkans and Caucasus and their Role in Contemporary Religio-Political Processes*

The settlement and presence of Georgian monastic and non-Chalcedonian (Armenian and Syriac-speaking) communities in the early to high medieval Balkans is an acknowledged sphere of the religious interchange between the Balkans and the Caucasus (and Transcaucasia and northern Mesopotamia in general) which, however, is rarely explored in depth. The study of the religious interchange between the Balkans and Caucasus in the sphere of Christian and Islamic religious heterodoxy and its role in the formation of modern sectarian religious identities in the two regions is an even less explored area of research. To address this problem the paper will offer a discussion of two (respectively Christian and Islamic) heterodox movements which spread from the Caucasus (and Transcaucasia) to the Balkans, Paulicianism (in the early medieval period) and Hurufism (in the early Ottoman era). The analysis will be based on literary and archaeological evidence published and explored in the last twenty years and will dwell on the following problems: how did the Balkan wings of these two movements maintain their links and communion with the co-sectarians in the Caucasus and Transcaucasia to preserve their sectarian religious identity, and what was the nature of the socio-religious pressures which occasioned the transformation of their religious identities in the early Ottoman period. Following on my recent work on current sectarian identity politics in the region between the Balkans and the eastern Pontic (as well as Caspian) areas, the paper will thus explore the general problem of sectarian identity formations in these regions (as part of the greater sphere of Balkan-Caucasian religious interchange) and its implications for contemporary identity claims, the politicization of sectarian identities and their possible future role in the religio-political processes in these peripheral zones (and meeting places) of the European-Mediterranean civilization and the Near East – one of the main aims of this conference.

Ivan BILIARSKY, Senior Researcher, Institute of History, Sofia; Associate Professor, Free University of Varna, Bulgaria:

*Davidic Kingship in the Periphery of the Empire (A Case Study on a Possible Impact of a Caucasian Tradition on a Bulgarian Mediaeval Text)*

The focus of the present paper will be a probable dialogue between the cultures of some Orthodox countries of the so called “Byzantine Commonwealth”: Armenia, Georgia and Bulgaria. This dialogue, or exchange of ideas, appears as an impact of the imagery of the more ancient culture of the Caucasian peoples upon some elements of the Bulgarian one. Our study will be centered on a concrete text, and its tentative interpretation: the case of the tsar Izot, cited in the Narration of Isaiah (the so called Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle of the Eleventh Century), which could be an adopted image from Armenian and Georgian Davidic kingship tradition – Ashot, and the Bagratid dynasty in general. It is to be stressed that this dialogue was possible only because of an existing common language of communication between both cultures: it is the imagery of the Holy Scripture that provides the code to the understanding of the world for each of them.

Arsen HAKOBYAN, Researcher, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan; Assistant professor, Chair of History, Gavar State University, Armenia:

*The Orthodox –Chalcedonian Armenians, From Caucasus to the Balkans: Outlines of their History and Identity*

The territory from the Balkans to Caucasus and the population of this region have been under the impact of different intercultural, confessional and ethno-cultural influences, conditioned by political, cultural, geographical factors caused by historical circumstances. Historically, the religious factor had an important role for the cultural and political developments of the peoples of this region.

In the Middle Ages, from the Balkans to Caucasus Christian culture created a common cultural space, where the boundaries of political and ethnic identities were defined by confessional factors. (Byzantium and Georgia – chalcedonic, Armenia, Caucasian Albania – anti-chalcedonic). These two tendencies of Christianity – chalcedonism and anti-chalcedonism – played dominant roles in the formation of cultural, religious and ethnic identities of the peoples of the Byzantine Empire, Armenia, Georgia, and Caucasian Albania. Also, there were some cultural interpenetrations, borderland and contact territories where, as a result of these cultural, confessional, ethnic, political influences and developments, different groups developed their complex identities.

In historical sources one of such groups is known under the names “Armenian–Romes”, “Tsayt–Armenians” (Half-Armenians) etc. They were the Orthodox Armenians (chalcedonic), but the language of confession of this group was Armenian. It was an isolated group within the wider Armenian society. Their settlements were in Armenian- Georgian-Byzantine borderland and contact territories. The confessional factor had a deep influence on their identity orientations during historical developments. As a result of this, the process of formation of ethnic and confessional identities has taken place (Byzantium, Georgia, Greece).

Until 1915-1922 the last part of this group lived in some villages in Turkey. After the Genocide, part of them migrated to Greece and established new settlements. The new situation and the change in geographical, political, cultural and social conditions had different impacts on the transformation and construction of the identity of this group.

Mariam CHKHARTISHVILI, Professor, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University,  
Director of the Institute of History of Georgia:

with

Sopio KADAGISHVILI

BA student, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

*Perception of Ethnicity in Medieval Georgia and at the Time of Georgian National Consolidation*

Today Georgian identity is defined sharply: national state and its internationally recognized territory, national language and history, self-name etc. But when was Georgianness? How was the phenomenon of ethnicity perceived in pre-modern Georgia and in the 19th century, when the shaping of the Georgian nation had taken place? This presentation is an attempt to answer these questions.

In the introductory part we will concern ourselves with theoretical issues of the investigation, with problems of definition of the terms used (first of all we will try to define the notion of ethnicity), and with the identification of indicators of ethnicity; after this, we will present information concerning the sources the research is grounded on.

In the principal part we will group the obtained materials according to the main ethnic indicators, namely: self-name, myths of common origin and ethnic electivity, as well as ethnic in-group global mission, attachment to a certain territory considered as homeland, perceptions of language and religion as identity markers, perception of others, first of all co-residing and neighboring ethnic entities.

The analysis of the obtained materials allows us to conclude:

1. In medieval Georgia ethnicity was a clearly perceived category and a developed sense of ethnic belonging (*Georgianness vis-à-vis otherness*) already played an important role in societal development;
2. The Georgian national community, which emerged in the 19th century, was the accomplishment of the nation's non-western ("ethnic") model: the belief in a common origin had played the role of a powerful consolidating factor in the forging of the Georgian nation.

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*The Challenges of the 21th Century*

Gianluca PASTORI, Professor Faculty of Political Science, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan:

*Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea. The Balkans, the Caucasus, and European Energy Security*

In the last few years European countries have grown increasingly sensitive to the energy security issue, especially facing Russia's renewed importance on the supply market. Still lacking a full-fledged EU common energy policy, many countries have managed to solve their domestic difficulties either by tightening their binds with Moscow, or by finding new commercial partners, trying to differentiate their energy mix or adopting some form of 'middle way' to reduce their overall vulnerability. None of these steps has led, nonetheless, to apparently stable results. On the contrary, deeper drifts have emerged among some core Union countries, further jeopardizing the adoption of a common stance towards the problem. Infrastructural projects have been among the main causes of disagreement. The heated debate fostered by EU decision to include 'Nabucco' pipeline in its 'Southern energy corridor' somehow epitomized this bleak state of things.

The Balkans and the Caucasus play a very special role in this context. Many East European and Balkan countries – Czech Republic (79%); Slovakia (100%); Bulgaria (96%), Greece (82%); Serbia & Montenegro (87%); Macedonia (100%) – are wholly or almost wholly dependent on Moscow's energy supply. At the same time, they provide important transit routes, bypassing both the old Soviet grid and the new Russian projects in southern Europe, and representing potentially useful alternative to market Caucasus resources, still largely landlocked or forced to flow through the Russian network. In a wider perspective (sometimes envisaged by 'Nabucco's supporters), the whole Balkan/Caucasus region (including Turkey) could develop into a main energy hub, collecting and distributing oil and gas coming from a wider basin stretching from Kazakhstan and Transcaspia to Iran, Iraq, and – in the most optimistic (or utopian?) schemes – the Gulf.

However, some important obstacles affect the emergence of such a hub. Uncertainty still surrounds key elements of 'Nabucco', while the project's economic viability has often been challenged. The project's same ambitions become a problem when faced with EU difficulties in developing a common position and the deeply entrenched rivalries existing among its member countries. Divergences have surfaced among 'Nabucco' partners and – more important – in the last months, both Russian and US position seem to have changed. The adoption, by the Obama administration, of a less antagonistic stand towards Moscow has affected its support towards the development of an alternative energy network in South-East Europe; at the same time, rumors have spread about Russian will to supply gas to feed 'Nabucco'. From this point of view, EU seems thus still far from finding its long-coveted energy security, while ambitions, in the Balkans and the Caucasus, to assert these regions as 'the' European energy hub seem no less far from their fulfillment.

Emmanuel KARAGIANNIS, Assistant Professor, Department of International and Economic Relations, University of Macedonia, Greece; Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Kadir Has University:

*The U.S.-Russian Competition in the Caucasus Region*

The collapse of communism and the disintegration of the USSR did not only lead to the establishment of the newly-independent republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, but also turned the Transcaucasus into a zone of great powers competition. In August 2008, a brief war between Russia and Georgia broke out, devastating the Transcaucasus. While the details of the war still remain foggy, it is clear that Russia's triumph will have repercussions for the international system. Therefore, there is an urgent need to understand the causes of that war; in particular, why Moscow decided to intervene in the breakaway republic of South Ossetia. Only then the international community will be able to prevent the outbreak of another war in the region.

The paper will claim that Moscow decided to intervene following the Bush administration's decision to support the Georgian candidacy for NATO membership. The Russian political elite has largely perceived, with some justification, NATO enlargement into the former Soviet South as a hostile act aimed at the encirclement of Russia. Despite claims to the contrary, NATO decision to keep the prospects of Georgian membership on the table at the April 2008 Bucharest Summit not only did not appease Moscow, but served to reinforce Russia's fears about NATO encirclement. Furthermore, Russia's decision to intervene in South Ossetia was based on a rational cost-benefit calculation. The timing of the Russian invasion was hardly a coincidence. It seems that three factors counted in the Russian calculations in favor of an armed intervention in South Ossetia: Russia's pivotal role in the Iranian nuclear standoff, U.S. preoccupation with Iraq and Afghanistan, and record-high oil prices.

Vugar BAYRAMOV, Chairman, Centre for Economic and Social Development, Baku, Azerbaijan:

*Do Rich Energy Sources Assure Sustainable Development for the Caucasus Region?*

The economic life of Azerbaijan is closely tied to oil. This study claims that the advantage of possessing oil can quickly be spoiled if the resources are merely spent to satisfy short-term interests. However, if managed wisely, e.g. through proper defining and prioritizing of the long-term interests of the entire society owning the resources, having oil can be extremely beneficial. Proper resource management ensures that the benefits are cumulative, sustainable and consistent. But if these interests are not well-defined, agreed upon, and followed through, then the resources run the risk of being squandered to serve short-term and small group interests only.

The stability of the Caucasus, essential to keep the transport of Caspian oil and gas continuous, is even more vital to world markets and strategic interests. The Caspian Sea region has about 6 % of the world's oil reserves and 8 % of the world's gas reserves. Given the energy needs, the Caucasus countries are becoming more important as security allies in the U.S.-led campaign against terrorism.

The rich sources can also be a tool for integration among Caucasus countries, since Azerbaijan has rich resources, while Armenia and Georgia face scarcity of reserves. Unfortunately, the efficiency gap in the management of oil money in Azerbaijan is enormous. Improvements need to be made in the oil money accumulation, saving and spending processes in order for this short-term national resource to better serve the long-term development needs of the nation. The necessary changes include redefining and streamlining the Oil Fund, in parallel with improvements in budgetary and public investment work, in order to assure sustainable development for the region.

Arolda ELBASANI, Chair, International Relations Department, European University, Tirana;  
Research Fellow, Free University, Berlin:

*Politics of Enlargement in the Western Balkans: Extensive Conditionality and Weak Incentives?*

Following more than one decade of violent and uncertain transitions in the Balkans, the EU has envisaged a new strategy, comprising the perspective of membership for all the countries in the region. The so-called Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) has become a word of faith, loaded with high expectations for change. This paper seeks to analyze the potential of the SAP to foster promised transformation in the region. The paper proceeds in three parts. First, it elaborates on different forms of post-cold war interventions in the region. Second, it outlines the main instruments of the SAP. Third, it explores the innovative features of the SAP compared to the previous enlargement framework, and analyses the implications of these innovations. The paper suggests that the SAP is an undisputed improvement compared to previous strategies in the region, to the extent it has embraced the promise of membership and outlined the procedures of accession. Yet, the SAP suffers from the overloaded and not easily reconcilable double agenda, combining stabilization and association objectives. In addition, the SAP commitment to membership is rather vague and ambiguous compared to the previous case of enlargement. Overall, those features might emasculate the transformative power of EU enlargement strategy in the region, since extensive conditionalities correspond to weaker incentives. Moreover, given the ambiguity inherent in the SAP, it is the dynamics within the EU itself that could mould the speed and the tone of a possible enlargement in the Balkans. It can not be taken for granted, as long as the EU is busy to absorb the wide range of its new members, while most EU countries keep resisting another wave of enlargement.

## *Conflict Zones*

Hanna SHELEST, Senior Researcher, National Institute for Strategic Studies. Odessa Branch, Ukraine:

*Comparative Analysis of the Independence Proclamation and Recognition of Kosovo and South Ossetia/Abkhazia*

In this research the author will analyze the process which led to the independence proclamation in Kosovo, and in the Georgian territories (South Ossetia and Abkhazia). What are the roots of such acts? Who has influenced the decision-making process? Were the preconditions and international environment the same? Was Kosovo independence a trigger for the Black Sea regions and can it be a precedent for others?

In the second part the author will examine who has recognized Kosovo and South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Why some European states recognizing independence of Kosovo declined recognition of the former Georgian regions? Also we will be interested in the possibilities for future recognition by the states and international organizations, and how these facts influenced European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Belgrade and Georgia.

In the third part we will pay some attention to the two years of independence of the separatists regions. Have they become really independent and sovereign states? What is necessary to happen for them to become such states and be recognized as equal actors on the international arena.

The international community still can't explain to the public why the Kosovo case is a unique one and cannot be invoked for other separatist territories in the Black Sea region. Having similarities and differences both in the preconditions and consequences of the independence proclamation, all three regions have rather different perspectives of their future development. Their independence and sovereignty depends less on them and their internal development than on interests and politics of third states. In such circumstances the conflict potential of these regions remains high.

Marieta KUMPILOVA, PhD Student, Leipzig University:

*Double Diaspora: Circassians from Kosovo in the Russian Federation*

In the “era of globalization” and transnationalization Diasporas become an important phenomenon. The changing nature of space and time in a new global context trigger the emergence of a Diasporic consciousness. According to Paul Gilroy, modern communicative circuitry has enabled dispersed populations to converse, interact and even symbolize significant elements of their social and cultural lives. The break-up of the Soviet Union, and geo-political changes which followed this event, highlight the emergence of ethnic identity in the Diasporas which trace their historical “homelands” in the region. The Circassian Diaspora is one of these Diasporas. The fall of the “iron curtain” enabled some Circassians to transform the “homeland” from an abstract concept to everyday life, by making journeys, short visits, or taking up residence in their historical motherland. This had not only a dual effect on ethnic identity, but Circassian history, culture and traditions were challenged.

In this paper we will study the re-immigration of the small Circassian community from Kosovo to the Republic of Adygeja in Russia in 1998/1999. The main aim of this research is to analyze their cultural memory and the ethnic identity before and after the repatriation. “Seventy-six members of an ancient ethnic minority group have fled the Kosovo conflict and arrived in southern Russia. The Adygs, better known as Circassians, flew in from the Kosovo region of Yugoslavia to their historic homeland in southern Russia on Saturday. Forty-two families, whose ancestors settled in Kosovo during the 19th century, when it was part of the Ottoman Empire, had been living in two villages outside the Kosovar capital, Pristina”. This excerpt from the article published by BBC News on August 2, 1998, was left without much attention from the world community. Nevertheless, it was one of the most important and remarkable events for the Circassian community, especially for Circassians who are in a state of Diaspora for more than 150 years. The Circassians (Tscherkessen) or the Adyghs, as they name themselves, trace their descent from the indigenous peoples of North-West Caucasus. Pushed out by the Tsarist Russian expansion into the Caucasus, and encouraged by the Ottoman Empire, large numbers of Circassians, possibly up to 1.5 million, left for the Ottoman domains. Mass migration started in 1864 and the immigrants were settled by the Ottoman state in various parts of the Empire, first in the Balkans and later in Anatolia and the Syrian Province. Today, the Circassians form communities of different sizes in some Balkan countries: Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Palestine/Israel, Germany, Holland and others.

Within the Russian Federation, Circassians live primarily in the three newly formed republics (previously autonomous regions): Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Adygeya. Resurgence of ethnic and national identity after the collapse of the former Soviet Union set off national movements and a few thousand Circassians, mainly from Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Kosovo have re-immigrated to the Caucasus. Today 139 Kosovo Circassians live in Adygheya, in Mafekhblj (“The happy village”) 20 km outside of the capital city of Adygheya, Maikop. The village was built especially for Kosovo repatriates. The Kosovo Circassians live in Adygeja for almost 10 years now. We postulate that this time is enough to show the process of adaptation and challenges to their identity in their everyday life.

Dmitry SHLAPENTOKH, Associate Professor, Indiana University, USA:

*The Evolution of the Chechen Resistance*

Throughout almost a generationally-long struggle with Moscow, the Chechen resistance, North Caucasian people's resistance in general, has changed. And their attitude toward the West has also changed in the course of time. At the very beginning of the struggle, the resistance to Moscow was mostly limited to Chechnya. At that point, the Chechens, led by Dzhokhar Dudaev, had visualized the Chechen future as an independent state, fully incorporated in the global order. Consequently, the leaders of the Chechen resistance were mostly predisposed to the West. They believed that the West would help them to fight the Russians and then, upon the defeat of Moscow, would help Chechnya to be a viable state.

Still, as time progressed, the resistance evolved and finally split into two segments in 2007. One was represented by moderate nationalists, led by Akhmed Zakaev. These people continued to emphasize the line of early Chechen leaders, with their desire to be a part of the West. One might assume that they tried to maintain the Chechen resistance's connections with the West even more than Dudaev.

The other group moved in a different direction. They became jihadists, and this led to the reevaluation of their approach to the West. Their vision of the West became skeptical and even critical. First, they proclaimed that Chechens and, in fact, most of the people of the Northern Caucasus, are bound together by Islam but not by their ethnic roots. And from this perspective, the West is not the Chechens' friend. The West collaborated with Russia in the attack against the Muslims; and Chechens joined other Muslims in fighting the West.

*Imperial Politics. The Historical Background*

Taline TER MINASSIAN, Professeur des Universités, Institut National des Langues et des Civilisations Orientales, Paris, France:

*The Balkans and Caucasus: Two Peripheries of Two Empires. An overview of different comparative historical approaches*

### 1-The Balkans and the Caucasus: a comparative approach

Both located on respectively opposite borders of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, the Balkans and the Caucasus share a common destiny and cultural similarities. During the XIXth century “highland values” characterize both Balkanic and Caucasian nation-making (“mountaineer nationalism”) processes. Within the Ottoman Empire, the national question in the Balkans and in the Caucasus can be compared from within but also from an outside perspective, that is, from the viewpoint of the great powers game and international diplomacy. In this respect, the Balkans and Eastern Anatolia can be fruitfully analyzed and compared through the prism of the Russian interpretation of the “Question d’Orient” and in the academic production of Russian orientalism.

### 2-The Balkans and the Caucasus : an interactive approach

In the XIXth century, revolutionary and national movements in the Balkans led to the emergence of independent states. This early process inspired the other nations and minorities within the Ottoman Empire - some of them being located at the southern border of the Russian Caucasus. Revolutionary movements in the Balkans, for instance the hayduks, were admired and thus perceived as a kind of paradigm by the Armenian revolutionary movements. Historians should investigate this interactive link between the Balkans and the Caucasus and pay more attention to the mutual perceptions at the opposite borders of the Ottoman empire. What is the Caucasian perception of the Balkans on one hand? Is there a Balkanic perception of the national movements in the Caucasus – for instance the guerrilla led by Imam Shamil in the Northern Caucasus in the XIXth century – on the other hand ?

Moreover, internal Ottoman migrations from the Balkans to Eastern Anatolia (muhajirs from the Balkans, Armenian Diaspora in the Balkanic states), the formation of internal Diasporas (for instance the Greek Diaspora in the Pontic area) are another field of transversal approaches of both the Balkans and the Caucasus.

### 3-The Balkans and the Caucasus : a geopolitical approach

The Balkans and the Caucasus are often seen as geopolitical frontlines. The breakup of Yugoslavia and the USSR in the early 90s reactivated territorial conflicts which were more or less “frozen” during the Cold War. The concept of “balkanization” has become a general paradigm to analyze national rivalries at work also in the Caucasus. A comparative approach could also be of some interest to look at the question of the new “quasi-states” (Kosovo, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabagh or Northern Cyprus), as well as the “weak states” or “failed states”, such as Bosnia or Macedonia.

Ovidiu CRISTEA, Senior Researcher and Deputy Director, “Nicolae Iorga” Institute of History of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Romania:

*The Quest for Maritime Supremacy in the Black Sea during the Later Middle Ages*

The control of the sea was considered an imperial attribute in the Middle Ages, and the Black Sea makes no exception in this respect. The collapse of the Byzantine hegemony in 1204 opened the way to a reconfiguration of the balance of power in the area, which lasted until 1484, when the Ottoman Empire completed the conquest of the entire region. The paper will try to point out the strategies pursued by the continental and maritime powers involved in the struggle for domination in the Black Sea (Byzantine empire, Genoa, Venice, the Golden Horde, Ottoman empire, minor powers such as Trebizond, the emirate of Sinope, or the despoteia of Dobrotici), and to underline the key role played by the maritime supremacy in the quest for hegemony in the area. In this respect, the analysis of Genoa's policy (one of the main actors in the area after 1261) could bring some interesting insights. The Ligurian Republic tried to limit or even to forbid the access of other maritime powers in the Black Sea and, in long run, to put an end to any possible maritime competition. Though this goal was never completely achieved during the period of Genoese hegemony (1261-1475), it was adopted and successfully put into practice by the Ottomans.

Julian BROOKS, PhD Candidate, Simon Fraser University, Canada:

*Understanding Intervention: Imperial Thought and Establishing Order in Ottoman Macedonia*

What motivates intervention? The Black Sea region and the Balkans in particular have repeatedly been the targets of interventions by the Great Powers. These involvements have often been made for ostensibly humanitarian purposes or to impose diplomatic settlements. Not without justification, cynics have argued that such intrusions are actually motivated by the strategic interests of one or more power, or, at best, they come only at the behest of public outcries over well-publicized injustices. The Müzzsteg Reform Program of 1903—1908 in Ottoman Macedonia is an example of an intervention which, it seems, was conceived largely at the behest of popular outcries in the Great Power nations, especially in Great Britain. However, closer inspection suggests that it is a mistake to assume that this intervention was merely a sop to appease public opinion. Using the case of the British experience in Ottoman Macedonia, this study seeks to explore the motivations of the governmental and diplomatic officials which shaped British policy. Not only was there some genuine concern for the plight of the inhabitants on the part of senior British officials, but a feeling of responsibility to promote “order” and “social efficiency” through reform in Ottoman Macedonia. Further understanding of the thought that gave impetus to this intervention not only sheds light on a poorly understood event of a century ago, but also has contemporary relevance, as the Great Powers continue to direct interventions in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

*Ethnic Identities and National Building in the Black Sea Region*

Thede KAHL, Senior Researcher and Head of Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences,  
Vienna,  
Austria:

*Ethno-cultural Diversity in the Black Sea Area as an Objective for Research*

Concerning their ethno-cultural structure, the Balkans and the Caucasus are among the richest areas in Europe. The paper offers a comparative introduction into the ethnic structure of the Balkans and the Caucasus and argues why surveys on ethno-cultural diversity in the area may be an important objective for research, despite the subjectivity and changeability of ethnic identity. For this purpose, recent censuses, maps and surveys on ethnic structure of the Balkans and the Caucasus will be discussed.

Ana DEVIC, Visiting Professor, Gender Studies Graduate Program, University of Novi Sad, Serbia;

Center for Racism, Ethnicity and Nationalism, University of Glasgow, UK:

*Intellectuals and Nationalism in the Balkans and Caucasus: Forging the History of Socialism - 'Naturalizing' Nationalist Violence*

Following the early warnings of Max Weber about the primordialization of 'race' and ethnicity, Rogers Brubaker's critique of the 'neo-substantialist' views of nationalist violence in post-1989 Eastern Europe, and Pierre Bourdieu's observations on how hegemony works through academic institutions, this paper compares academic and political structures in the Caucasus and former Yugoslavia as institutions that simultaneously produced the power and prestige of intellectuals, and were deeply and increasingly affected by the politico-economic and moral crises of the late socialism. The nationalist 'alliance' between the late socialist 'ethno-entrepreneurs' (segments of the Communist elites) and intellectuals in the fields of humanities and social sciences, and the role of the latter in the recording and publicizing of national history as a 'proof of salvation' (and affirmation of new violence) will be analyzed along the following lines of comparison: 1) the effects of the collapse of socialism and pending democratizing-meritocratic reforms on academic institutions in a federative structure, where the Communist mode of appointments to relevant positions in the humanities had for long favored a hierarchy of 'titular' and other 'native' nationalities cadres in each Soviet or Yugoslav republic, and had created quasi-clan organizations among intellectuals; 2) the strategies of the Communist-era 'ethno-affirmative' action, which determined the blueprints of Yugoslavia's and the USSR's disintegration, made ethnic nationalisms and fragmentation of the federations into a resource pool for intellectual establishments and prompted numerous aspirants to these positions to forge their national histories as a proxy for post-anti-Communist ideology, as a proof of their own marginality during Communism, and, significantly, as a means of obfuscating the low levels of inter-ethnic hostilities on grassroots level and their weak links to relevant popular grievances. One of the aims of this paper is to reject the neo-substantialist and Orientalist-Balkanist explanations of nationalist violence that led to the current state of 'peace as no war' in Chechnya, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, to refrain from explaining the downfall of Communism by resorting to 'ancient histories' transposed to the crises of late socialism, and undertake the task of peace-building in these regions by understanding actions of nationalist politicians and intellectuals not as "oracles of peoples' histories", but as a social strata with mobilizing powers struggling in the contentious fields of political opportunities. These social actors are invested not with homogeneous ethnic 'cultures', but with *habitus*, as defined by Bourdieu: consisting of class, gender, regional, professional and other statuses of privileges and disadvantages, activated and engaged in the post-Cold War state and global transformations.

Ketevan KAKITELASHVILI, Associate Professor, Institute of Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities; UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia:

*Reconstruction of History and Nation Building in the Post-Cold War Era: South Caucasus and the Balkans*

The paper aims to analyze the processes of the reconstruction of history and its instrumentalization in South Caucasus and the Balkans in the post-Cold War period; to reveal the common characteristics along with the process of reconstruction of history, as well as the similar traits of the national histories in this period of time.

After the break up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, parallel processes of nation building took place in the new states of the regions. These processes were marked by several resembling aspects. The most important were a search for new identities and the setting of new orientations, accompanied by the violent conflicts. The (re)construction of the national history emerged as an integral part of the nation-building process. The “new” histories played an important role in the formation of the new identities, national mobilization as well as conflict escalation. It is widely known that during the last several decades history lost its reputation as a holder of “truth” about the past. It is increasingly viewed as an interpretation which is changing according to the political circumstances and ideologies.

In South Caucasus, as well as in the Balkans, relations among societies were heavily influenced by the new versions of the national history or on the contrary, a reevaluation of history was determined by the new reality. The instrumentalization of history was remarkably reflected in the sphere of history teaching. History textbooks represent one of the most important tools for shaping collective historical consciousness. They are perceived as a medium between different groups, with the prime concern of passing down to students a common past for a mutual future.

A range of similar features could be found in the versions of national histories created in South Caucasus and the Balkans. Above all, the ethnocentric character of the narratives should be mentioned. The societies of the regions are facing the challenge of overcoming conflicting interpretations of history.

Zaal KIKVIDZE, Professor, Department Chair, Department of General Linguistics, Akaki Tsereteli State University, Georgia:

*Script Shift and Splitting of Nations in the Caucasus, in the Balkans, and Elsewhere: the Russian/Soviet Experience*

The most overt marker of a social function of a language is its written form. It gives a higher social and political significance both to a language, and to the community that uses the language in question. Moreover, writing and codification can both act as identity markers.

The present paper deals with the impact of the Russian/Soviet 'language building' policy upon various languages and communities, with special reference to script shift (change of a writing system) in the Caucasus, in the Balkans, and elsewhere. Concerning Georgia, the tsarist and communist periods differed not in the aims of these regimes (both were aimed at the extinguishing of non-Russian languages in order to assimilate occupied peoples), but in the ways chosen for achieving them. Hence, there had been two waves of attempted script-making for Megrelian, a vernacular spoken by ethnic Georgians inhabiting some parts of western Georgia: tsarists preferred the Cyrillic alphabet for Megrelian, while communists were more diplomatic, and encouraged the invention of Megrelian writing based on the Georgian alphabet. These activities were certainly aimed at splitting the Georgian people. However, similar activities appeared successful in association with Circassian, resulting in four 'languages' with the same Cyrillic script, but varying modes of orthography.

Almost the same scenario was realized in Romania in 1940, when the country was split, and a new Cyrillic script was designed for the Romanian language spoken in Moldova in order to identify Moldovans as a separate and distinct nation from Romanians.

The same happened with other languages and communities under the Soviet rule, for instance, Mongolian (resp. Buryat), and Chinese (resp. Dungan).

Elena POKALOVA, Editor, *Eyes on the ICC*; Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science, Kent State University, USA:

*Ethno-Nationalism in the Post-Communist World: The Communist Inheritance?*

The fall of communism in the early 1990s ushered in a new wave of ethno-nationalist conflicts across the countries of the former communist bloc. The expectations that the demise of the centrist communist state would contribute to the peaceful liberation of ethno-nationalist identities, whose members had been held hostage under oppressive governments for decades, did not materialize. Instead, restructuring of the ethnic ties and connections in numerous cases led to escalation of violence and bloodshed. Claims for independence came from both federal units within the republics of Yugoslavia and USSR, and autonomous provinces and regions within federal units, such as the cases of Chechnya, Kosovo, Transnistria, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Demands from these entities varied from secession to reunification with historical counterparts, and the level of violence fluctuated as well. While varied in form and shape, and the nature of demands and claims, all these ethno-nationalist conflicts present an outcome of the shortcomings of ethnic politics under communism.

Communist political systems were designed to enhance ethnic categorizations. As a form of ethnic engineering communism was instrumental in creating ethnic cleavages in places where they were previously weak or nonexistent, and amplifying ethnic divisions where they were already in place. For instance, the Soviet state came into existence as an ethno-federation, built on the principles of equality and self-determination. However, while those were the proclaimed values, suppression of numerous ethnic groups was practiced throughout the Soviet era. Institutional design of communist states, on a par with the communist ideology, promoted some ethnic groups, while excluding others from the system. Thus, communism greatly contributed to the accumulation of ethno-nationalist grievances, which, following the unraveling of communism in 1989, resulted in escalated ethno-nationalist demands that in many cases led to violence.

This paper looks at the role of the communist factor in the evolution of ethno-nationalist conflicts following the fall of the communist bloc in the early 1990s. It looks at the ideological and institutional design of communist states as the determinant of the suppression of ethno-nationalism and examines why the mechanisms of power-sharing failed. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are analyzed as examples of constructs that erupted in violence after the fall of the communist ideology. These cases are contrasted with the Ottoman Empire. While the Ottoman Empire incorporated numerous ethnic groups within its borders, its collapse, unlike that of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, did not lead to violent ethno-nationalist outbreaks. The difference between these cases, I argue, can be attributed to the communist experience, which was the causal mechanism behind many of the ethno-nationalist conflicts springing up across post-communist states.

Ana DINESCU, Ph.D student, Department of History, University of Bucharest, Romania:

*The Balkans and the Caucasus. The Limits of the Comparative Perspective. The Ethnic Minority Issue*

The Balkans and the Caucasus area are often compared from the point of view of the high level of diversity of ethnic minorities, the complex and conflict-loaded imbroglio of historical memories and identities. The prospective European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the most part of the countries included in these regions encouraged a generalist approach, aiming to recommend general models, proven or assumed as successful. One of the most used items in this respect is the ethnic minority issue.

In our paper we will try to analyze the limits, the strong and weak points of this perspective regarding the ethnic minority issue, in relation to the general European and international standards and requirements.

As long as the more or less recent memories are playing an important role in reconfiguring and building identities, a holistic approach runs the risk of providing an apparent solution, instead of going deep into the roots of the conflict and finding case-by-case tools and instruments for offering a comprehensive and long-term answer. The basic starting point for achieving such results is a general – and, in this case, universal – framework, encouraging open discussions and political dialogue, instead of a culture of hate and dissent. Within this general outline local-fit solution to the ethnic minority problem should be inserted on a case-by-case basis.

*The Sea as Bridge and Border*

Constantin ARDELEANU, Lecturer, History Department, “Dunărea de Jos” University, Galați, Romania:

*The Lower Danube, Circassia and the Commercial Dimensions of the British-Russian Diplomatic Rivalry in the Black Sea Basin (1836-37)*

The Treaties of Adrianople (1829) and of Unkiar Skelessi (1833) greatly strengthened Russia's position in the Black Sea by securing her domination over the Danube mouths and most of the eastern shore of the Euxine, and by turning the Russian war fleet into a dreaded force not only in this area, but also beyond the Straits. The British reaction to this unacceptable shift in the balance of power in the Near East was quick and intense, and the top priority of Lord Palmerston's Eastern policy was, in the following years, to obtain the annulment of the disadvantageous Russo-Ottoman agreement of 1833. In the context of this emerging “cold war”, the Foreign Office diplomats used any opportunity to protest against what they considered as violations of the provisions regarding the freedom of trade and navigation in the Black Sea. This paper aims to present, in a comparative approach, two such cases, which contributed considerably to the development of British Russophobia in the 1830s: a) the British economic enterprises in the Romanian Principalities and the Russian infringements in the way of free trade and navigation at the Lower Danube (mainly the Bell & Anderson commercial ventures at Braila and Galatz); b) the detainment of the schooner “Vixen”, arrested in 1836 by the Russian authorities around the Circassian port of Sudzhuk-Kale, officially employed for carrying salt from Wallachia to the Caucasus. Both incidents, related to the restless personality of David Urquhart, were largely presented in the insular press as examples of arbitrary aggressions against the free trade, and became the topic of official interpellations in the British Parliament, paving the way for a rivalry that was eventually to lead to the Crimean War.

Zaal ANDRONIKASHVILI, Associate Professor, Ilya State University, Tbilisi, Georgia;  
Academic Researcher, Centre for Literary and Cultural Research (ZfL), Berlin:

*“The Autochthone Order”*

In his book *L'arcipelago* the Italian philosopher Massimo Cacciari analyses different names and meanings for “sea” in ancient Greek. *Talassa*, the most common Greek denotation of sea suggest maternal connotations of the Mediterranean. *Pelagos* refers to another type of sea - high sea - which surrounds a sailor like a desert, laborious and bitter like its water, full of risk and adventure. The third denotation, *pontos*, is of Sanskrit origin and means “road”. The meaning of *pons*, that of “bridge”, of the most necessary and dangerous bridge is inscribed in this word. In his Essay “Some Fragments of the Village Notes”, the Georgian writer Aka Morchiadze links the semantics of the Georgian word *zghva* – “sea” – to *zghvari* – “border”. The driving question behind the present paper is the following: what sort of sediment has the attitude towards the sea formed in the Georgian cultural memory? Could the sea have been perceived as a unifying space? What are the cultural implications of the perception of the sea as a road, a bridge, a unifying space on one hand, and as border and danger on the other? To answer the above questions, I have chosen a novel by the Georgian writer Otari Chiladze, *A Man Went Down the Road*. The first part of this novel offers a modified comprehensive version of the Argonauts myth, focused not on the Greeks, but on the Colchians. This novel describes a phenomenon which we can, with some caution, call a national trauma. This trauma is the loss of independence, the conquest of the mythical Colchis and of its capital Vani by the Cretan Empire of Minos, which echoes the loss of independence by the Georgian Kingdoms after 1801, and of the Georgian Republic in 1921. The spatial-temporal model of the world, which I describe along Chiladze’s novel, cannot be understood as something that historically modeled Georgian cultural space, but rather as a projection of affects emerging as reactions to political events in the mythological space - thus oscillating between myth and history.

Markus BAUER, Journalistic and academic free-lance writer (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Switzerland):

Land und Meer – *Black Sea and Caucasus in German Culture*

German culture has had very special perspectives on the Black Sea and the Caucasus as a region in the "Southeast". Travelers from the 18th century onwards were fascinated by the Sea that Ovid had sung about, and the valleys and mountains that were mingled with the ancient myths of Prometheus or the Argonauts. From Goethe to Alexander Kluge and artist Joseph Beuys, one can find the Caucasus as place of terror and glory. In the 1920s it was the well known Essad Bey, a Jew from Baku who converted to Islam, who presented to his German readers the mountains in the Southern Soviet Union as a mystery and miracle. Kafka's friend Franz Werfel, and Armin T. Wegner had written about the Armenians and the tragedy that had occurred to them during WWI.

My paper will deal with three very different German language authors who used the Black Sea region and the Caucasus as a fountain of their imagination.

Dorothea Stella from Cernăuți (Czernowitz) had to flee to the east after the outbreak of WWII and survived the ordeal in Georgia. Her trilogy *The Ring of Prometheus* catches in moving pictures the strange look at the region that was absolutely unknown to her before her escape.

Büchner Prize-winner Alexander Kluge has integrated the myth of Crimea and Caucasus in his project of putting German past and WWII in alternative cultural settings.

Christof Ransmayr wrote with his Ovid-paraphrase *Die letzte Welt* (The Last World, 1988) one of the most impressive stories on the exiled poet, and at the same time one of the first post-modernist novels in German literary history.

Putting these three writers in a historical and cultural context my paper opens a perspective on the basic problems of European cultures, facing multitude and migration.

*Crossing Borders through Music and Drama*

Birgit KUCH, PhD Candidate, Institute for Theatre Studies, Leipzig University, Germany:

*Georgia on Stage: Tbilisi's Theatres between Rose Revolution and August War*

Since the 1990s, Georgia underwent continuous transformations. In 2003 the “Rose Revolution” led to an elite and generation change. It also caused reform processes that touched most spheres of public life. Already divided between followers of the opposition respectively the government, in August 2008 Georgian society experienced a short but momentous war with Russia.

In this context of rapid changes und upheavals, my paper is concerned with the question how contemporary self-representations actually look like. Questions like: Who are we, How should we evaluate our past and construct our future etc., are often heard in Georgia today. To investigate such issues, the cultural practice of theatre can be analyzed as a place where collective representations are staged, embodied and also negotiated. Tbilisi's growing number of stages hints at the significant functions that theatre fulfils as a public platform for different interest groups, be it political actors, minorities or different generations.

My paper presents the results of several field research stays conducted in Tbilisi with regard to three theatrical seasons, over a period from summer 2005 to summer 2008. Drafted as work in progress, it will discuss the major tendencies in the development of Tbilisi's theatre-scape, while mainly focusing on the contents and aesthetic strategies of some exemplary productions. Furthermore, in the discussion of such mise-en-scènes, the collective self-images of Georgia that are constructed and negotiated on stage will be discussed.

Katharina STADLER, PhD candidate, Department of Musicology, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin; Research Fellow, Centre for the Study of Caucasus and Black Sea Region, University of Georgia:

*Black Sea Fire – Crossing Borders on the Musical Scale*

The Black Sea littoral states' geographical situation at the gateway between the east and the west has been influential in both their political and their cultural history and present. Today a specific trend can be observed, which results from their having been stuck in constant transition: the urge to build state identities and to redefine nations. These notions can frequently be traced in contemporary music.

Various musicians have been singing for Georgia as a nation during the past years. The interaction between musicians and politics can be highlighted when looking at the annual national song contest *Patrinoti*, organized by the United National Movement. Since the initiation of this patriotic musical competition in 2005, some of the musicians awarded could proudly see their songs turned into music videos, while the organizers themselves could distribute these videos on state TV, as well as screen them in Tbilisi's metro stations. About a year ago the dance floor audiences of Georgia and Ukraine were united in their vocal protest against Russia's neo-imperialistic politics, through the Georgian Eurovision entry "We don't wanna Put in". Suddenly a patriotic theme had crossed the borders. Though seemingly focusing on national integrity and patriotic differentiation, music in this case defies such boundaries.

Furthermore, actual countercultural cooperation can be observed: musicians seek to discover the world, so as to discover themselves and their heritage. This search for identity disregards political borders, neither identifying states, nor redefining nations. A starting point can be the Black Sea. An outcome could be The Shin's attempt to gather sound from the surrounding countries, the *Black Sea Fire*.

Peter McMURRAY, Associate Curator, Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature;  
Assistant Coordinator, Harvard Ethnomusicology Lab, Cambridge, MA USA:

*Singers of Borderland Tales: A Comparative Study of Bosniak and Turkish Epic Song and the Performance of Identity*

Although epic songs have long been viewed (loosely) as expressions of popular sentiment and memory, the performance of such songs have also played significant roles in generating and maintaining certain cultural identities, especially in border areas. In this paper, I consider two geographically distinct but thematically related bodies of epic song and their performance, namely from Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) and Ottoman Turks, looking at the ways in which these songs are both reflective and generative of borderland identities. First and foremost, I compare the poetics of border conflict in two particular cycles, heroic songs from the Bosnian *krajina* (the area lying roughly between modern-day Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia), which recount the Ottoman conquest and “Christian” counter-conquest of those regions; and the Book of Dede Korkut, a smaller but better-known collection of 12 songs that simultaneously narrate conflicts between Oghuz Turks and Christians in the Caucasus and older disputes from Central Asia.

Secondly, I consider how the repeated singing of these songs blurs the lines between narrative and its performance through a variety of literary devices, most prominently by destabilizing certain roles: of the singer (the South Slav *guslar* or the Turkic *aşık*) in a performance; of the narrator within the tale; and of the heroes themselves. In addition, the audience is conscripted into a more active role within these tales, as participants of sorts. I conclude with two specific examples of (relatively) famous bards and (perhaps coincidentally) blindness, contrasting the Turkish legends of Koroğlu (Son of the Blind Man), a hero-*aşık* found in epic tales from Central Asia to Turkey, with those of the renowned Slavic *guslar*, Ćor Huso (Huso the Blind), whose exploits include an engagement singing epic songs—presumably of these same border conflicts—for the Austro-Hungarian court. The performance of these songs, I argue, continually re-enact the politics of the disputes depicted within the songs themselves, suggesting both a perpetual relevance through each new performance, but also a permanent quality of chronological distance or pastness, a significant factor as these poetic traditions wane in contemporary society.

Victor STOICHIȚĂ, Post-doctoral Fellow at the New Europe College, Bucharest & Estelle Amy de la BRETEQUE, PhD Candidate in Ethnomusicology, LESC-CREM CNRS, Paris, France :

*Musics of the New Times – Romanian manele and Armenian rabiz as Icons of Post-communist Changes*

In this joint presentation we propose to compare two musical genres, from two countries, one on each side of the Black Sea. Both genres are linked with post-communist times, deep changes in society, and suggest for local observers an idea of “new times”. In both of them, local observers feel strong national and/or ethnic definitions (seeing them either as “local” products or as “exotic” borrowings). Both of them are at the same time popular, and supposed to be the music of a small minority of newly enriched people. Both genres raise strong controversies amongst local politicians and intellectuals, who tend to argue against their (allegedly) perverted moral values, and to worry about the social impact of these music genres. We believe that both these musical genres crystallize more than just aesthetic taste. This is why we want to describe in a comparative manner some key features of the Romanian *manele* and the Armenian *rabiz*.

After a short common introduction, our comparison will be structured in two papers. One of them will deal with the *rabiz* (Estelle Amy de la Bretèque) and the other with the *manele* (Victor A. Stoichiță). Both of them will cover the same topics, some of which will reveal similarities (such as the ones mentioned above), while others will show contrastive features (such as the ethnic definitions and the ideologies of power which underlie each genre). Drawing on textual, iconographic and musical analyses, we will try to understand how *manele* and *rabiz* became icons of deep changes on each side of the Black Sea.