Provisional Stabilities:
The Politics of Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia
Ronald Grigor Suny
The University of Chicago

The comfortable notion that deep-lying stable cultural differences are fundamental to ethnic and national conflicts has taken quite a beating in recent scholarship. Essentialist, holistic, homogeneous conceptions of culture, such as figure in the popular works of Robert Kaplan and Samuel Huntington, have been seriously undermined by theoretical and empirical historical work.[1] Rather than appearing coherent and uniform as it might look from afar, ethnicity at closer range looks fragmented, its cultural content contested and conflicted. Rather than primordial and organic, the nation has been reassessed as relatively modern, the product of deliberate intellectual and political work. And ethnic conflict, rather than the modern repetition of "ancient tribal struggles," is seen as more contingent, requiring other kinds of causal explanation. This article employs a constructivist approach to analyze the fluidity and multiplicity of identities as they function in national formation and the practice of internal and foreign policy. Rather than conceiving of nations and states as possessing single identities from which their interests and behavior follow, the approach here proposes that political actors are capable of employing various identities, constituted both historically and by elites, that shape their attitudes and actions in domestic and international arenas. Because, arguably, interests are tied to identities -- that is, what we think we need is connected to who we think we are -- the whole question of self-understandings, goals and aspirations, fears and anxieties must be investigated as prerequisite to analyzing the security requirements of states.

The problem of forging relatively stable political and national identities is particular acute at the present time in much of post-Soviet Eurasia. Insecurity and danger, fear of the future with few anchors left to the past, and a perceptible sense that there is no purpose in the current chaos mark the mood of Russians and other former Soviet citizens as they drift into the new millennium. Millions are living without the kinds of guiding visions that they had grown used to in Soviet times, and elites and the state itself have little conception of a "national idea." Indeed, Russia is still a country that cannot agree on the words to its national anthem.[2] In the so-called Southern Tier, those countries stretching from the Black Sea to the Far East that suffered the most economically, politically, and in terms of ethnic and civil conflict after the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), uncertainty about current politics and future possibilities are deeply embedded in more general confusion about who "we" are and where "our" interests lie. The key problem is that new states have emerged from the debris of the Soviet Union but in many cases without clear identities or links to clearly conceived "nations."

Beginning with Mikhail Gorbachev's New Thinking in foreign policy, which radically reversed the valences of Soviet self-images and images of the other, the USSR and its successor states have searched desperately, experimented widely, and deliberately reconstructed their self-understandings of who they are and what the world is. This article presents, first, a brief theoretical discussion of identities and then proceeds to explore the development of ethnic and national identifications in Russia and the Southern Tier, looking particularly at the relationship of particular identities to the probability of civil, regional, or ethnic violence. Given the multiple and shifting identities of the post-Soviet states, political and intellectual elites are able to make choices – but only within a limited range. Whether an elite views its state as a democracy, a great power, an empire, the victim of others, or a carrier of civilization is key to its understanding of the state's interests. Whether the nation is conceived as ethnically exclusive or civilly inclusive has political consequences of great force. Accepting Alexander Wendt's view that "social threats are constructed, not natural," the dependent variable here are the identities and perceived interests that form state leaders' and populations' perception of threats or feelings of security in Russia and the countries of the Southern Tier.[3]

This article suggests that once nations and nationalisms are seen as less hardwired and fixed, policymakers can evaluate which kinds of national discourses might alleviate problems and which perpetuate violence. The cases presented here demonstrate that national identities and conceptualizations of interest can change rapidly in politically fluid moments. In Georgia, for example, within a few years (1989-93) exclusivist nationalism gave way to a more pragmatic inclusive idea of the nation that opened discussion of the possible restructuring of the state along federalist lines. But it took defeat and state collapse for this shift to occur. Georgia's experience differed from that of Armenia, where victory in war and opposition from the international community resulted in a turn toward a more exclusivist nationalism, an increasingly self-reliant foreign policy, and a more uncompromising position on the Karabakh question. In neighboring Azerbaijan successive failures of national mobilizations and a nationalist government gave

way to a pragmatic tactician who plays down nationalism and emphasizes his own competence and an oil-rich future. Most ominously, in Russia the problem is less one of changing national identity than of a chronic failure to construct an identity effectively. Prediction of Russia's future intentions, even what it might consider its interests, thus, is rendered particularly difficult.

Taking identities seriously means deep investigation into history and culture, an approach traditionally associated with area studies and often marginalized by the guardians of the hard, scientific core of a number of social science disciplines. The method employed in much of this article is inductive and historical.[4] Much recent writing on the new states of the former USSR has suffered from essentialist and primordialist readings of cultural coherence, assertion of the longevity and stability of identities, and conclusions based on a conceptual map of sharply divided ethnicities, religions, and nationalities. The need to know has created a veritable industry of expertise in the West with little grounding in history, familiarity with the languages of the region, or the particularistic local knowledge that gives deep texture to otherwise superficial analysis. This article attempts to bring together the theoretical insights of recent thinking on nations and identities with an interrogation of the cultural and historical specificities of post-Soviet Eurasia.

Theory and Practice

Much of security studies and international relations theory has been based on an epistemological picture of a real world in which bounded, coherent territorialized sovereign states exist in conditions of international anarchy and aim to increase their security and independence of action. In a simple version of such a picture states have but one identity, that of self-interested security seekers. That essential identity comes with being a state; it is eternal, unchanging through history or across the globe. Presumably it would be the same for states on other planets, in other universes. For neorealists anarchy is the real condition of international life, and states are caught in a "security dilemma"-- as they take actions to increase their security, they tend to decrease the sense of security of other states.[5] Though changing balance-of-power conditions may affect interests, competition and conflict are highlighted in this model; cooperation recedes as a long-term possibility. As a theory neorealism is elegant and parsimonious, but in analyzing actual historical conflicts it almost inevitably must concede some of its simplicity and bring in factors of domestic variables, existing political discourses, and cultural norms.[6]

The end of the Cold War, along with the decline of interstate warfare and the rise of ethnic conflict, has encouraged realists to extend this hardened image of states to more fluid social categories such as ethnicities and nations and to use international relations theory to explain nationalism. While structural factors, such as the state system, the internal strength or weakness of states, or ethnic differences are cited by some scholars as causes of ethnic conflict, others emphasize cultural and political factors, such as policies of discrimination or inclusion, elite choices, and historical memory.[7] Constructivists, like Alexander Wendt and Ted Hopf, however, move further and argue that identity and interest cannot be taken for granted or simply deduced from an abstract model of international relations, but become dependent variables to be explained.[8] Unlike neorealism, constructivism "assumes that the selves, or identities, of states are a variable; they likely depend on historical, cultural, political, and social context."[9] The identities of actors and agents are the product of the social practices among agents and between agents and structures. Neither actors nor structures are assumed to be fully formed and unchanging but are seen as mutually constituting each other in actual social practices. For constructivists power is both material and discursive; that is, it is also about the generation of meanings that are shared intersubjectively by different actors. Action gains legitimacy, even motivating force, only in the context of specific discourses. People will feel justified and motivated to fight for a king in one discursive universe but against him and for "the nation" in another. Because identities are never completely fixed but to some degree are fluid, multiple, and overlapping, predicting from identities is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Consequently, the world is less predictable but more subject to change in constructivist theory than in neorealism. Yet identities are a "congealed reputation," that is, the closest one can get in social life to being able to expect confidently the same actions from another agent time after time.[10] Constructivists argue that change and cooperation in world politics are possible, but they also are aware how difficult they may be to achieve. Depicting an international arena of ordered contingency, understandable only through contextualized, historicized investigation of identities, constructivists hold that conflict and cooperation are intimately tied to perception of threats embedded in historical experiences.

A NOTE ON IDENTITIES AND THE NATION

Identities are embedded in the stories we tell about ourselves individually and collectively, implied in the way individuals and groups talk and give meaning to their being, their selves, their roles. Identities -- whether gender, ethnic, religious, national or state identity -- are constrained by experiences

and available possibilities and might be thought of as part of a search for a useable past and an acceptable modernity to stave off anxiety about the present and future. One might think of identity as a provisional stabilization of a sense of self or group that is formed in actual historical time and space, in evolving economies, polities, and cultures, as a continuous search for some solidity in a constantly shifting world -- but without closure, without forever naturalizing or essentializing the provisional identities arrived at. When people talk about identity, however, their language almost always is about unity and internal harmony and tends to naturalize wholeness. It defaults to an earlier understanding of identity as the stable core. Almost unavoidably, particularly when one is unselfconscious about identity, identity-talk tends to ascribe behaviors to given characteristics in a simple, unmediated transference. One does this because one is that. But even as ordinary usage tends to homogenize and essentialize identities, theorists of identity insistently claim that as difficult as it is to accept, the apparent and desired wholeness and unity is made up, imagined, in order to create a source of provisional stability in a changing world.

National identity is a particular form of political identification. As universal as it tends to be in modern times (roughly from the late eighteenth century), it neither encompasses all peoples and communities nor exists exclusively or in isolation from other competing identities. As scholars have demonstrated in the last few decades, nation is not natural or given but must be worked for, taught, and instilled, largely through the effort of intellectuals, politicians, and activists who make the identification with the "imagined political community" of the nation a palpable and potent source of emotional and intellectual commitment.[11] Yet in much of the world, supranational religious or imperial affiliations coexist comfortably with subnational ethnic, local, regional, tribal, clan, and other affiliations and may work to undermine as much as to support national identities.

Whatever language and ideas ancient and medieval people used to understand the societies in which they lived, they were different from the discourse in which we speak about nations. Modern nations are those political communities made up of people who believe they share characteristics -- perhaps origins, values, historical experiences, language, territory, or any of many other elements -- that give them the right to self-determination -- perhaps control of a piece of the earth's real estate (their homeland), even statehood and the benefits that follow. Nations are articulated within the stories people tell about themselves. Like other identifications, they can be thought of as arenas in which people dispute who they are, argue about boundaries, who is in or out of the group, where the "homeland" begins and ends, what the "true" history of the nation is, what is "authentic" about being national and what is to be rejected. The narrative is most often a tale of origins and continuity, often of sacrifice and martyrdom, but also of glory and heroism.

Most important, modern nations exist within a universe of meaning that holds that the only source of legitimacy for state authorities is that they somehow represent that nation and rule with some kind of assent. The particularly modern form of imagining nation contains within it a notion of popular sovereignty, that the people have the right to rule themselves, and to impart legitimacy to those who govern them. In many of the actual instances of nationalism it is argued that each nation, however constituted, should have its own state, and that in all but anomalous cases each state should have within it a single nation. This powerful but ultimately utopian idea is the basis of much of modern politics, and much of the conflict in the twentieth century has been precisely about the ill fit between self-described nations and existing states.

Within many nationalisms a premium is placed on longevity, antiquity, and continuity in the calculus of the nation. Yet given that all human beings have been on the earth since roughly the same time, it is apparently the availability of a written or archaeological tradition and identification with that tradition that empowers the claims of some peoples over others to nationness and territory. Those with written language, a textual record, clearly recognized state forms are privileged over those who might have roamed the steppes in nomadic bands or lived in smaller nonliterate communities. Even so, quite long-lived "nations," such as Armenians, Georgians, or Jews, who have written traditions that go back millennia, have in modern times reconstructed and made consistent the varied and changing identities and ways of conceiving themselves that existed in the past. The discursive particularities of earlier identities have been reinterpreted in the frame of later templates, particularly that of the nation, so that a discontinuous and varied history has been simplified into the story of a relatively fixed "nation" moving continuously through time, struggling to realize itself in full nationhood and eventually independent statehood.[12] Since the times when people were more polyglot and polytheistic than we are today relatively, "soft boundaries" between ethnic or religious communities have been "hardened" into artificially clearer differences between peoples. [13] The move to nationness was also an effort at shoring up distinctions between those in and out of the nation and state policing of the boundaries between members and foreigners. Rather than preexisting

differences among people leading to violence, it is often the indistinctness of differences and contests over what the ethnicity or nation should include or exclude that produces conflict.

The move by scholars from a more naturalistic understanding of nations to a constructivist view of nations as modern "imagined communities" opens up the possibility to locate the potential for conflict in particular constructions of nations, certain national narratives and styles of discourse. If nations are not thought of as primordial, with their continuous existence stretching back to the time when the first humans emerged from the primeval ooze, then they might be seen as narrations that shift over time and can be potentially reshaped in the future as they have been in the past. Identity formation as a process of self-definition and definition of the Other is intimately connected to the generation of threat perception. "National histories" may be investigated, not so much to discover the "real" story behind the Serb-Albanian conflict in Kosovo or the Armenian-Azerbaijani hostility in Karabakh, as if one side's claims could convincingly outweigh the others, but rather how particular conceptualizations of nationhood contribute to notions of national interest and threats to national security. These connections will become evident as we explore the fragmented and evolving identities of Russia and its southern neighbors.

Russia's Identity Crisis

Russia's post-Soviet "identity crisis" has been interpreted by both authoritarian nationalist writers and more democratically oriented authors as the product of the radical, imposed turn from the "natural" course of history by the Bolsheviks. The seventy years of Soviet power are imagined as a deviation, a distortion that must be reversed in order to restore Russia to its true and healthy path toward civilization. This interpretation both contributed to and was itself shaped by the truly revolutionary shift from the Soviet regime with its clearly articulated ideology to one that eschewed official imposition of ideological conformity. The nature of that shift, limply labeled a "transition," was extraordinarily abrupt, with a sharp rejection of the norms and values of Soviet society, its view of history and the political world, and, in the name of "reform" the establishment of a systemless system with which the majority of people were completely unfamiliar. A world that had been experienced, even with all its repression, mundane imperfections and corruptions, as one of order, progress, and purpose, at least up through the mid-1970s, was abandoned by Russia's leaders and many intellectuals in favor of a world of unpredictability, embedded corruption and criminality, economic hardship, military weakness, and the precipitous decline of Russia from great power status to a wounded, humiliated, truncated state. As the liberal professor of philosophy Igor Chubais put it, "The euphemism 'reform'.... is used in reality to explain the abolition of the old rules -- often unacceptable but sometimes fair -- and the failure to accept any new norms at all. In the current situation, the term 'reform' has become a synonym of the concept 'chaos.'"[14]

The eradication of the Soviet value system did not result in a general consensus on national or state identity, and though many democratic and Western values have gained greater acceptance among Russians in the 1990s, the country remains deeply divided between those who support the general direction of the economic and political changes initiated by Mihail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin and those for whom the rejection of the Soviet past as an authentic part of Russia's history and tradition meant their ejection from the rebuilding of the nation. People who had fought for and suffered for that system were overnight rendered disgruntled, disoriented red-flag-waving marginals. The turn back to symbols and institutions of the pre-Soviet past -- the double-headed eagle, the imperial flag, the Orthodox Church, reburying the last czar's family (though not [yet] the revival of the Romanov anthem, "God Save the Czar" -- resonates negatively among many former sovki, not to mention the 20 percent of Russia's population that is neither Orthodox nor ethnically Russian.[15]

Russian political elites as well as public opinion are deeply divided over the question of what constitutes the Russian nation and state. Russians remain uncertain about their state's boundaries, where its border guards ought to patrol (at the edge of the Russian Federation or the Confederation of Independent States [CIS]?), confused about its future shape (is Chechnya in or out?), its relations with its neighboring states (is Belarus in or out?), and even its internal structure as an asymmetrical federation.[16] In a masterful review of Russian thinking on these issues over the last decade, Vera Tolz argues that three incompatible views of legitimate Russian statehood contend for acceptance. Conservative nationalists, the most militant Communists, and the so-called Eurasianists believe that "the Russian Federation should initiate the restoration of a union, which should be joined by as many of the former Soviet republics as possible."[17] A second group adopts an idea of the Russian nation that was prevalent in the prerevolutionary period -- Russia as the union of Great Russians, White Russians (Belorussians), and Little Russians (Ukrainians). This idea of Slavic unity, closely identified with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, involves ambitions to include other areas of Russian population, such as northern Kazakhstan, within the new Russian state. A third

vision is the formation of a republic of Russian speakers, integrating the Russian-speaking diaspora into the federation and, perhaps, allowing some non-Russian autonomies to separate from the Russian state. To Tolz's list of "homeland myths" a fourth might be added: the generally operative one that Russia is a multinational state in which "Russian" is both understood as ethnic Russian (russkii) and as citizen of the republic (rossiiskii). Within the Yeltsin administration, policy has gradually shifted from "a vision of Russia as a kin state of all Russian speakers," dominant from 1992 to 1994, to "policies facilitating the re-creation of some form of union on the territory of the USSR" becoming more important from late 1994.[18] Polling data reveals that "the idea that the new Russia should be primarily the state of Russian speakers who enjoy a legally defined dominant status, as well as the idea that the Slavic nucleus of the USSR should reunite, attracts the largest support within the Russian Federation."[19] Tolz ominously concludes that "the view that the borders of the Russian Federation are in urgent need of revision is more widespread among Russian intellectuals, politicians, and the public at large than is usually assumed in western scholarly literature."[20]

The lack of a clear, coherent, widely accepted national identity lay at the core of Russia's foreign policy fluctuations in the 1990s. No matter how weak it was at the moment, Russia continued to identify itself to itself and others as a great power, and great powers seldom operate under the same rules and constraints as lesser powers. Though increasingly it became a purely symbolic issue, as a great power Russia continued to see the "near abroad" as a sphere of interest and occasionally demanded a role in protecting those it considers its co-nationals (the so-called russkoiazychnye [Russian language speakers]) in neighboring states. Like the United States in the Western Hemisphere, Russia sought to police its own neighborhood and reserved the ability to guard frontiers that impinge on its security. Though Yeltsin did not plan to reannex the states of South Caucasia[21] and Central Asia, he promoted a greater military and political presence, even hinting that the United Nations should give Russia exclusive rights as gendarme in the area. Russia also made clear it wanted partnership in the exploitation and development of the natural resources of the region, most important the offshore oil in Azerbaijan. Moscow repeatedly claimed the right to protect rail lines in Transcaucasia, for the major link from Russia to Armenia passes through Abkhazia and Georgia and the line to Baku passes through Chechnya. The government stated that it was not interested in the dismemberment of the republics of South Caucasia, which could set "a most dangerous precedent" and lead to similar struggles in Russia, but was concerned about the bleeding over of unresolved ethnic conflicts into Russia. A reading of the Russian press reveals that opinion makers and decisionmakers shared a view of a Russia surrounded by dangers – from militant Islam, ethnic mafias, agents of foreign states, and drug traders.

The question for the Southern Tier was not whether there would be a strong Russian presence but what kind of presence it would be. Some prominent observers in the West feared the rise of a new Russian imperialism, pointed to Russia's self-image as a great power, and rehearsed Russia's repeated interventions in the near abroad. At the end of 1994 and early in 1995 Boris Yeltsin and his foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, publicly declared their support for the reintegration of the countries of the former Soviet Union, first economically, but also militarily and possibly politically. But Russia's self-proclaimed status was a highly imaginative one that did not correspond to its actual power. Even if Russia wanted to reconstruct an empire, it was no longer capable of doing so. Moreover, the war in Chechnya clearly demonstrated the heavy costs of empire, and Russian leaders hesitated to repeat that mistake. Rather than a sign of a pattern of Russian expansionism, the Chechnya adventure was a sign of state weakness, a product of the narrowing of political decisionmaking into the tight circle around Yeltsin. Chechens were presented by the authorities as bandits, vicious criminals, and drug dealers who presented a corrupting threat to the Russian state. Yet even though these images resonated among the population, a considerable and influential segment of the Russian public opposed (and continues to oppose) such imperial actions, even on the territory of the Russian Republic, let alone in the near abroad or East Central Europe.

Despite sometimes inflammatory rhetoric, particularly by Duma deputies, Russian foreign policy, notably toward the Southern Tier, tended to moderate over time. After almost a decade of independence there has been a grudging acceptance of the new constellation of states and the limits of Russian power. What might be called the "Yeltsin Doctrine" can be interpreted as recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the existing states, combined with a reluctance to give up Russia's paramount role in the Southern Tier. Though Russian policymakers favored dominance in the realm of security and, perhaps, a special role in protecting Russians and other minorities, Russia appears at present to be a relatively benign hegemon in relationship to the Southern Tier rather than a neo-imperialist threat.[22] Moscow has progressively come to terms with the actual limits of its power and Russia's new status as a regional power.

Like the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is consolidating state authority over its own territory, defining its borders, and policing its neighborhood to prevent any rivals from establishing influence in its sphere of interest.

Russia may not yet be a fully democratic state, but its evolution over the last decade has involved the internal generation among many elite politicians, as well as younger members of society, of an identification with democratic values, satisfaction with its current state boundaries, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbors. An optimistic scenario for the future might envision strong republics in the south that would encourage more moderate policies on the part of Russia, and a democratic Russia limiting its major strategic interests in the region to maintaining stable, prosperous states on its southern border and a secure buffer against intrusions from Turkey, Iran, and China, not the full burden of colonizing a complexly mixed and resistant population. Yet because of its own internal confusion and corruption, its occasional pretensions to empire and the insecurity it engenders among its neighbors, Russia has not been able to convince many of the former Soviet states that they ought to give up independence in decisionmaking in favor of Russian hegemony. Russia can no longer credibly claim to be filling a power vacuum or providing security or mediating conflict or aiding in economic development or building democracy. A crisis-ridden chaotic Russia cannot exercise the special role its pretensions to great power status want to play in the region. Russia's crisis of identity has left it without a clear justification for hegemony.

The Russian state is a state in flux, its "interests" dependent on such contingent factors as the health of an ailing president, the international economy, and the somber mood of its impoverished and disgruntled people. There is one more identity tale to be told here, a particularly melancholy one. The West, with its own array of identities, holds out the prize of membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to those who come with the right democratic and market credentials. NATO expansion to a select number of East European states, perhaps later to the Baltic countries, is a clear message to Russia that it is not fit for membership in the "West." As the border of the Western alliance moves eastward, Russia and the Southern Tier are left unmanaged and undefined, and Russia is left to fend for itself with the spectres of Islam, the drug trade, terrorists, and the dangerous opportunities created by the search for fossil fuels.[23] With Russia more isolated, conflicted about its identity and role in the region, the Southern Tier remains one of the most unregulated and unpredictable security zones in the world.

States and Identity in the Southern Tier

Within the states of the Southern Tier, as in Russia itself, the euphemisms "building a market economy" or "transition to democracy" hide more than they illuminate. The end of the command economy almost everywhere resulted in a mammoth transfer of wealth from the state to a new "bourgeoisie" that enriched itself by dipping deeply into the coffers of the old system. In many cases privatization was a code for looting of public and state resources, and the legitimacy of that transfer of wealth is bitterly questioned throughout the former Soviet Union. One of the more unexpected developments in the post-Soviet period was the power of the old Soviet system to reproduce itself in new ways even after the Communist Party had been disbanded. What institutional continuity and actual authority remains in many republics is tied back to the Soviet system. The effectiveness of the Soviet regime in eliminating alternative elites to emerge left the heirs of Communism, stripped of their ideological baggage, the most effective political players in many of these republics. Of the eight republics of the Southern Tier, five (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) are ruled by former Communist first secretaries. In at least two cases, Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia and Nursultan Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan, the former party chiefs are encouraging quasi-democratic transitions, but the longer they remain in power the more they are seen as hindrances to further democratization. Nazarbaev, for example, rules with little challenge in Kazakhstan and has used plebiscites to extend his tenure in office. Elsewhere a democratic facade conceals the continuing power of the old apparatus. Today the unreconstructed old Communist rulers, now disguised as "leaders of the nation," still rule in Turkmenistan (Sapurmad Niyazov) and Uzbekistan (Islam Karimov). Heidar Aliev returned to power in Azerbaijan and maintains his position through the forceful containment of the opposition. In Tajikistan the Communist Party suffered a deep schism, but those currently in power, supported by Russia, are former Comm unists (the president, Imomali Rakhmonov). In Kyrgyzstan the former academic Askar Akayev has skillfully maneuvered between democratic and former Communist forces. Only in Armenia has the nationalist opposition managed to maintain itself in government. But even here, in recent elections to the presidency in Armenia (March 16 and 31, 1998) the former party chief, Karen Demirchian, who had essentially retired from politics to run an enormous enterprise, came in a close second to the nationalist prime minister, Robert Kocharian. In the parliamentary elections (May 30, 1999)

his coalition with key figures of the nationalist movement won the largest bloc of votes, and the former party chief became speaker of the parliament.

Yet even with the dubious connections to the ancien régime, state authority remains fragile in all the southern states. But not only statebuilding -- the creation of authoritative (hopefully, not authoritarian) and legitimate states whose laws will be obeyed, taxes paid, internal security protected -- has been on the agenda of the post-Soviet south, but nationbuilding as well. In the master narrative handed down as the dominant available explanation of the fall of the Soviet Union, coherent and conscious nations emerged from decades, if not centuries of oppression, to take the opportunity offered by Gorbachev to assert their natural, long-denied aspirations for independence and sovereignty. But a more plausible story might emphasize the ways in which the disintegration of the Soviet system was the result, at least initially, not of resurgent nationalism, but of the weakness of, indeed abdication of, power by the central Soviet leadership. What resulted from Soviet collapse was not the birth of fifteen fully formed nation-states but fledgling states that only in some cases coincided with relatively homogeneous, coherent, and nationally conscious nations within them. Where the nation and the state coincided most successfully, as in relatively homogeneous Armenia, internal ethnic conflicts were easily avoided. Where states were much more multinational or binational, as in Kazakhstan, serious issues of the inclusivity or exclusivity of what constitutes the nation arose. Several of the states -- Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Tajikistan -- fragmented, albeit for different reasons, but problems of ethnicity, identity, and the appropriate political forms to sustain the new state in the future were at the base of the devastating and violent crises that fractured the new republics.

The nation was real and primary in Soviet discourse, in a sense a fixed, primordially rooted, bounded group attached to a given territory. And this idea of nationality as an almost biological attribute of a person is pervasive in post-Soviet thinking. Yet Soviet rule fostered the integration of this mixed multinational subcontinent, highly interdependent economically, with millions of people living outside what now had become their "homelands." New minorities in republics face to face with new dominant majorities no longer had any appeal to an imperial center. In all republics and most autonomies politics was ethnicized. Greater representation and rights were given to so-called titular nationalities than to others, whether or not they were majorities. Nationality developed over time into a powerful source of advantages and disadvantages in the distribution of Soviet resources. So tightly welded together were politics and nationality in the Soviet system that post-Soviet players find it difficult to imagine other ways of doing politics. Few are able to recover the more distant past when people of different ethicities lived in multicultural communities, without territory assigned to one local nationality.

SOUTH CAUCASIA AS A CULTURAL SPHERE

In the longue durée of history, even as "national" cultures evolved, more general regional cultures developed (and continued into the Soviet and post-Soviet periods). One could (and still can) speak of Central Asian, Caucasian, Baltic, and East Slavic cultural spheres.[24] In South Caucasia the homogenization and territorialization that has marked Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia in our century are both different from what went on in this region in the past and what is happening in many other parts of the world today. During much of its history, South Caucasia witnessed extraordinary movement and migration of peoples, nomadic invasions through the isthmus, migration up the mountains to greater safety, movement down the mountains for better economic opportunity, transhumance up and down the mountains according to season, movement of peasants to towns, permanent or near-permanent migration from the region into the diaspora (either inside or outside the Russian and Ottoman empires or the USSR), and return (for Armenians, for example) to the "homeland" from the diaspora. And in this process of incessant moving, there was constant mixing of populations, blurring of ethnic boundaries, intermarriage, bi- and trilingualism, even to the point of some people becoming other people, and some disappearing into others, like the medieval Caucasian Albanians. These processes of migration and mixing created a unique multiethnic, multilingual, highly diverse but distinctive Caucasian culture, shared by all the peoples of the region. Food, customs, dress, dances, and rituals blended into one another, and linguistic and religious differences did not always map neatly onto regional or class cultures. Yet in the nineteenth century, and in many ways even more insistently during the Soviet period, national intellectuals emphasized the differences among the Caucasian peoples and downplayed the similarities -- this in the face of an official Soviet ideology that celebrated the rapprochement and merging of peoples, their eventual integration into a homogeneous Soviet people. Given the cosmopolitan nature of Caucasian civilization, the reconstruction of the region along exclusivist national lines and bounded territorial units made conflict extremely likely.

The ironic result of Soviet nationality policy, long unrecognized by Sovietologists, was that a Marxist state dedicated to an internationalist ideology and an antinationalist agenda actually fostered the formation of relatively cohesive national communities in the union republics and other autonomies.[25] Long before the revolts of the late 1980s, non-Russian Soviet peoples had gained a much more articulated conception of who they were as a people than most had possessed before 1917. Though dispersion and migration, Russification and Sovietization of culture, and severe restrictions on the expression of nationalism characterized the Stalinist and post-Stalinist periods, at the same time national political and cultural elites developed; most union republics became demographically more "ethnic"; and national literatures, arts, and histories were produced, albeit within the limited frame of the Soviet system. There was a perceptible tension between the modernizing program of Soviet industrialization and urbanization, with its concomitant effort at the creation of a "Soviet people," and the "nationalizing" program that followed from the Leninist nationality policy that ethnicized much of Soviet politics, particularly in the union republics. But in each union republic, besides the universal Soviet Russian culture, one ethnic culture -- that of the titular nationality -- dominated over those of ethnic minorities within the republic. Thus Armenians in Azerbaijan progressively lost their cultural institutions (theaters, schools), while the Republic of Armenia became more culturally homogeneous. Abkhaz and Ossetians in Georgia also felt culturally deprived, as Georgian culture steadily made inroads into their autonomous regions.

Although alternatives to national division and exclusivist nationalism existed for millennia in Caucasia, they were progressively muted in the twentieth century, and in the late-Soviet and early-post-Soviet periods, ethnonationalism became the nearly uncontested ideological preference for Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Georgians. There simply seemed to be no other contenders. Anticommunist political elites turned to nationalism as a way to gain support and mobilize the population of their embryonic states. But even though ethnonationalism played a large role in the popular anti-Communist mobilizations of the late Soviet period, in the 1990s unexpected shifts in collective identification took place in all three republics.

ARMENIA AND THE LIMITS OF IDENTITY CHOICE

For the first four years of its existence, the second independent Armenian republic was privileged by the relative cohesiveness of a nationalist consciousness that emerged from the Karabakh movement. Despite the war, blockade, failure to repair the damage suffered in the December 1988 earthquake, and growing apathy and despair that encouraged migration to the West, the government of Armenia under Levon Ter Petrosian displayed an enviable stability and an apparently steady trajectory toward democracy and capitalism. Though the unity of the original band of nationalists who had led the Karabakh movement in Erevan splintered within the first year when key members broke with the government and formed opposition parties, a series of victories in the Karabakh war, beginning in early 1993, and the Russian-brokered cease-fire in the spring of 1994 gave the Armenian government the breathing space it needed to bring civil order to its towns, lay the basis for a restoration of the economy, and win over foreign friends and aid. In those years Armenia enjoyed an enviable image in the West of a struggling but sincere democracy.

Armenia's internal stability was assisted by a number of factors. First, a powerful, binding national discourse to which much of the population subscribed gave the government, as the heir to the Karabakh Committee and the movement that displaced the Communists, an abiding legitimacy. Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia was a country, not unlike Israel, made up only in small part of descendants of those who had lived on the territory before 1920. Large numbers of people immigrated from the diaspora, people who shared a national vision and "returned" to the "homeland" in order to build an Armenian society and culture. Their vision of the nation involved a sense of continuity with a long and glorious past, a deep feeling that Armenians had been victimized by others, particularly the Turks who carried out the Genocide of 1915, and a confidence in their abilities to survive. At the same time Armenians less committed to a national way of life emigrated in large numbers to other parts of the USSR, intermarried with non-Armenians, and gradually lost their sense of ethnicity. As Soviet Armenians were transformed from a diaspora nation into a territorialized one, their understanding of nationhood was strengthened in the struggle to "recover" Karabakh. Their sense of victimhood was reinforced by Azerbaijani atrocities against Armenians in Sumgait (1988) and Baku (1990). Even as the Ter Petrosian government attempted to improve its relationship with Turkey and modulate the Genocide issue, ordinary Armenians, particularly in Karabakh, transposed the image of mass murders to the Azerbaijanis, who for them became "Turks."[26]

A second reason for Armenian unity and coherence was the fact that progressively through the seventy years of Soviet power, the republic grew more Armenian in population until it became the most

ethnically homogeneous republic in the USSR. On several occasions local Muslims were removed from its territory and Armenians from neighboring republics settled in Armenia. The nearly 200,000 Azerbaijanis who lived in Soviet Armenia in the early 1980s either left or were expelled from the republic in 1988-89, largely without bloodshed. The result was a mass of refugees flooding into Azerbaijan, many of them becoming the most radical opponents of Armenians in Azerbaijan.

A third factor contributing to the relatively peaceful transition to statehood was that the Communist Party of Armenia peacefully surrendered power to the Armenian National Movement (HHSh) in 1990 and did not resist the coming to power of the nationalists as their comrades in Azerbaijan did. The HHSh enjoyed extraordinary popular support and legitimacy as the anti-Communist leader of the nation. The movement faced little internal opposition and was able to direct political fire outward toward the Azerbaijanis and the Russians, particularly Gorbachev, who hindered the merger with Karabakh.[27]

Yet within a few years of independence, serious strains affected the government's efforts at creating a democratic state with legitimacy and authority. The government's moderate stance toward Turkey, its downplaying of the Genocide issue, and its nuanced policy toward the Karabakh problem generated opposition from more nationalist forces, particularly from the diaspora party, the Dashnaktsutiun, now established in the republic. Even as he supported Karabakh's self-determination (and semicovertly its military efforts), Ter Petrosian refused to recognize formally Karabakh independence or call for annexation. Instead he argued that the conflict was between the Armenians of Karabakh and Baku. At the same time the president's attempt to reverse Armenia's traditional orientation toward Russia and build better relations with Turkey foundered on the Karabakh conflict and Turkey's gravitation toward Azerbaijan. At first the Armenian public was willing to support these unorthodox positions, though the diaspora and parts of the traditional intelligentsia were wary if not hostile. Over time, however, arrests of opposition politicians, manipulated elections, and suppression of popular protest combined with chronic economic decline and the burdens of war and blockade to erode Ter Petrosian's personal authority. When at one of his rare press conferences he argued that the only feasible solution to the Karabakh conflict was acceptance of the broad outline of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe proposals that attempted to reconcile Karabakh Armenian national self-determination with preservation of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, a serious schism arose, first with the Karabakh Armenian leadership and then within the government of Armenia. Ter Petrosian now lost the support of his key allies in the power ministries (defense, interior and national security), as well as his prime minister, Robert Kocharian, and the bulk of his supporters in parliament.   Forced to resign in early February in what was essentially a "constitutional coup état," Ter Petrosian was succeeded by Kocharian, who went on to win a dubious election to the presidency.

Almost immediately the new government reverted to a more traditional nationalism, one more congenial to the diaspora and in line with the hard-line position adopted by the Karabakh government. Armenia turned back to a Russian orientation and reemphasized the Genocide issue, always a source of pain and emotion for Armenians and a powerful wedge between Armenia and Turkey. As a consequence, a profoundly risky attempt to reorient the national discourse ultimately failed before intractable obstacles both domestic and foreign – not the least of which was Turkey's identification with Azerbaijan. The power and coherence of the Armenian national identity, the popular projection of the images of genocide onto the Karabakh conflict, and the closing off of the Turkish option all contributed to the fall of a once-popular national leader whose move beyond the limits of the Armenian identity choices and national discourse did not bring the expected political payoff.

AZERBAIJAN: WEAK NATIONAL IDENTITY, WEAK STATE

Conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians has historical precedents, but assertion of any unbroken continuity between earlier prerevolutionary conflicts and late-Soviet hostilities must neglect mention of the relatively peaceful seventy-year Soviet interlude. The conflict over Karabakh stems from the anomaly of placing an enclave dominated demographically by Armenians in another republic. In the context of Soviet nationality policy, not to mention the more universal discourse of the nation, the usual practice of linking ethnicity, territory, and political authority was compromised. Even though its population was roughly three-quarters Armenian, Moscow kept Karabakh in the Azerbaijan SSR for economic and strategic reasons. Armenian identity was officially inscribed on internal passports of Karabakh Armenians, but within Azerbaijan this was progressively perceived as a disadvantage given Baku's policies privileging the titular nationality. Karabakh Armenians often fared better materially than their Azerbaijani neighbors yet were aware that they were not as well off as their Armenian compatriots across the border in the

Armenian republic. Moreover, Armenian cultural and educational institutions suffered within Karabakh, and protests against Azerbaijani rule occurred periodically but without any positive resonance in Moscow.

Though Azerbaijanis outnumber Armenians by almost two to one, they were unable to mount an effective defense of their territory. This led to a popular explanation that the Armenians won the Karabakh war largely because of Russian assistance. But in fact Russian aid was not decisive. Defeat was more closely related to a weak sense of identification with the nation among Azerbaijanis. Successive Azerbaijani governments found it nearly impossible to mobilize young men to fight for Karabakh. Though nationalist outbursts occurred, particularly among dispossessed refugees from Armenia, they tended to be sudden and short-lived. An articulate nationalism remained confined to the urban intelligentsia.

Azerbaijani national identity was largely formed, first among a few intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and among the population during the Soviet period.[28] Yet it remained fluid and hybrid. Religiously Shiite Muslim, originally in the sphere of Persian culture, northern Azerbaijan had lived under Russian influence for nearly two hundred years. The Azeri language is Turkish, and there had been an intellectual sympathy with the secularism of the Kemalist republic. But a large part of the Soviet Azerbaijani intelligentsia over time became culturally and linguistically Russian in many ways. And central to Azerbaijani aspirations was the dream of an eventual unification of northern (Russian) and southern (Iranian) Azerbaijan. Their desires, however, were not reciprocated, as Azerbaijani militants found out in late 1989 when they tore down the fences along the Soviet-Iranian border. Turkic speaking "Iranians," who numbered just about twice the population of their northern compatriots, displayed little affective connection with them.

Before the Soviet period Azerbaijanis, known then as "Tatars" or "Turks," were a largely peasant population with some presence in the Baku working class. The middle and upper classes of the region were Armenian and Russian and generally looked down upon the Muslims as "dark," inferior people. In 1905 and again in 1918 Baku's Muslim poor turned on the local Armenians as the most convenient target. Social, religious, and cultural differences, resentments and memories of past violence, kept these two Caucasian peoples distant from each other, eyeing each other suspiciously from different districts in the same town or from separate villages. Yet during the seven decades of Soviet rule about half a million Armenians lived in Azerbaijan, and many thrived in Baku and other cities as well-established professionals. About half that number of Azerbaijanis lived in the Armenian Soviet republic, most of them farmers and reputedly the purveyors of the best fruits and vegetables to be found in the open markets. Little intermarriage took place between the two peoples, and Armenians in Azerbaijan preferred to learn Russian rather than Azeri.

When the demonstrations demanding the merger of Karabakh with Soviet Armenia began early in 1988, Azerbaijanis reacted violently in Sumgait, killing Armenians indiscriminately. These pogroms had deep social roots in the chronic economic depression in Azerbaijani society that particularly affected young people and Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia, as well as in widespread apprehensions about Armenian designs. Azerbaijani intellectuals organized a Popular Front to defend their national interests but soon lost control of a mass movement that fed on the growing resentment of privileged Azerbaijanis as well as hatred for Armenians. In January 1990 mobs in Baku rampaged through the city, hunting down Armenians until the Soviet army moved in, killing hundreds of Azerbaijanis, and restored a fragile order. Gorbachev's use of force to shore up the unpopular Communist government created a deep antagonism to the Soviet state that would carry over to post-Soviet Russia.

Karabakh may have been the catalyst for sporadic and often violent ethnic expression among some Azerbaijanis, but the urban elite was unable to translate ethnic effervescence into a sustained national movement. With the nationalist movement divided and disorganized, the Communist elite survived the coup against Gorbachev and led the country into independence. But after Armenian military successes in Karabakh and the slaying of a large number of Azerbaijani civilians in Khojali, the Communist government fell in May 1992 in an armed engagement with troops favoring the Azerbaijani Popular Front. The nationalist government of Abulfaz Elchibey reoriented Azerbaijan away from Russia toward Turkey and pulled Azerbaijan out of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Elchibey's identification with the secular Turkish republic to the West created a chasm between the republic of Azerbaijan and "southern Azerbaijan."[29] Nationalist interest in greater Azerbaijan, combined with a more Turkish identity for Azerbaijan, led to hostility and suspicion between Baku and Tehran and the gravitation of Iran toward the Armenian side in the Karabakh conflict. Even within Azerbaijan the Turkish orientation met opposition. There were protests when Elchibey's government officially redesignated the Azeri language as "Turkish" and a more silent opposition among intellectuals to attacks on the Russian language. Even more devastating for the nationalists was the country's failures in the war. After the Armenian victory at

Kelbajar, which completed the effort by the Karabakh Armenians to form a land bridge to the Armenian republic, rebel forces overthrew the Elchibey government and returned the former Communist chief Heidar Aliev to Baku in June 1993.

The legitimizing discourse around Aliev was less about nationalist aspirations than about promises of future prosperity and the competence of an experienced leader in a time of dangerous opportunities. Well-connected to the elites entrenched in the economy and localities, Aliev's government managed to consolidate its power, at least in the environs of Baku. Riding the surface of a fragmented and dispirited society, even without the kind of unifying nationalist discourse and anti-Communist legitimacy enjoyed by the Armenian government, Aliev beat back attempted coups, disarmed militias loyal to the Popular Front, and survived a number of assassination attempts. Despite the continued losses suffered in the Karabakh war, Aliev won a significant degree of popular support as the politician who best represented a promise of peace and stability in the future.

Caught between a desire to get on with economic development and the fear that accepting the conditions that would end the Karabakh war would humiliate his countrymen and potentially lead to his losing power, Aliev skillfully used oil, pipelines, and promises to build up personal authority. Reversing the "turn toward Turkey" under Elchibey, he distanced his government somewhat from Ankara and drew closer to Moscow and Iran. Although he agreed to have Azerbaijan rejoin the CIS, Aliev stopped short of allowing the stationing of Russian troops in the republic. In October 1998 he claimed to have received 76 percent of the vote in the presidential elections, but his state remained fragile and without a widely accepted and deeply felt sense of nationness. The amorphous nature of Azerbaijani identity presented Aliev an opportunity to mould that identity, but corruption and the fractured nature of Azerbaijani society has limited his ability to mobilize his people. As his health deteriorates, the aging president has attempted to shore up his legacy by pushing his son as his natural heir. Reverting to earlier legitimation formulas in more modern terms, Aliev loyalists speak of the unique gene pool that the great leader passes on to the next generation.

GEORGIA: STRONG NATIONAL IDENTITY, WEAK STATE

While Armenia's strong national identity aided in the transition to independence and stability, and Azerbaijan's much weaker one hindered the creation of the new state, Georgia's strong and coherent national consciousness, paradoxically, contributed to the disintegration of the state. Georgia's violent passage from Communist Party rule through civil and ethnic war to the political disintegration was largely the by-product of a virulent, exclusivist nationalism that in the context of the multinational character of the country fragmented the country into warring ethnicities and social groups. Like other union republics in the USSR, Georgia privileged the titular nationality and subordinated in various ways the national minorities. In the late Soviet period Georgians were anxious about their demographic situation -- low birth rate among Georgians, higher among Muslims and Armenians; and the location of compact ethnic minorities along the borders of the republic. Anti-Russian, anti-Communist, and Georgian nationalist sentiments were expressed as powerful themes of anxiety and impotence. Abkhaz, Ossetian, Azerbaijani, and Armenian minorities within Georgia were depicted in the rhetoric of the nationalist leader and first president of independent Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, either as guests of the Georgians or agents of Soviet power. Elected overwhelmingly in 1990, Gamsakhurdia's increasing authoritarianism quickly alienated, not only the non-Georgians, but influential members of the nationalist movement who rose up against him in the fall of 1991, drove him from Tbilisi, and invited Eduard Shevardnadze to return to Georgia early in 1992. The separatist nationalisms in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, encouraged at times by forces in Russia, led to de facto independence from Georgian control, the brutal expulsion of Georgians from Abkhazia, and the bitter invitation from Shevardnadze to Yeltsin to reintroduce Russian troops into Georgia. In Ajaria, a Georgian Muslim enclave on the Turkish border, the local leader, Aslan Abashidze, maintained a de facto "independence" from Tbilisi, even while acknowledging Georgia's suzerainty. Abashidze conducted a lucrative cross-border trade with Turkey, enjoyed the protection of Russian troops, and encouraged the development of a distinct Ajarian identity for the local Muslim "Georgians."

Like Aliev, Shevardnadze had to overcome his communist past, now clearly a liability, and reconstruct himself as a national figure above region or clan, uniquely competent to lead state and nation through the darkest of times. An icon of the Virgin Mary replaced Lenin on the wall behind his desk. He ended the prevalent civil disorder, survived several assassination attempts, and improved the economic situation somewhat. Shevardnadze eliminated key rivals who had their own independent military followers and turned Georgia from a chaotic and authoritarian quasistate into a relatively orderly democratic one. Significantly, the Georgian political elite reconceived the nature of their nation in the second half of the

1990s. Humiliated by the loss of Abkhazia and anxious about the further disintegration of their country, those around Shevardnadze tempered the more extreme expressions of exclusivist nationalism, and a younger generation of politicians emerged under Shevardnadze's sponsorship that practiced a modulated realism and political sobriety. The president eliminated more chauvinistic, exclusivist nationalist rhetoric and emphasized the country's multinationality. Although his government suffered the loss of Abkhazia and has been unable to negotiate a peaceful resolution of that conflict, Shevardnadze successfully reduced tensions with South Ossetia after 1993, granting them extensive autonomy within Georgia, and has suggested reorganizing Georgia along federal lines.

Political analyst Ghia Nodia has suggested that the rethinking of Georgian identity and interests may be related to the traumatic defeats the country suffered.[30] Whereas Armenia's victory in the Karabakh war led to a more intransigent stance, Georgia's defeat has resulted in a serious questioning of paths it had taken. Shevardnadze's domestic and foreign policies, which have been characterized by compromise and negotiation, are not only appropriate tactics for a weakened and fragmented state but reflect a significant shift in national identity toward a more inclusive notion of nationhood. That shift, however, should not be exaggerated, for much of the democratic and tolerant tone of Georgian politics appears to come down from the top. Minorities in the republic remain suspicious of Georgians, and it is unclear whether Tbilisi can build a successful multinational democracy in this fractured country.

CENTRAL ASIA'S OVERLAPPING IDENTITIES

It was in the study of the traditionally Islamic peoples of Central Asia that Western scholars erred most egregiously in deducing behavior from essential religious and cultural characteristics. Social scientists predicted that all Soviet Muslims would gravitate toward an all-Islamic identity, that religious identification would prove stronger than ethnic, that Muslims would be by nature anti-Soviet, and that post-Soviet Muslims would gravitate toward closer relations with Turkey, Iran, and the Arab world. Most of these expectations have proven to be faulty. Based as they were on official Soviet anti-Islamic materials and in the absence of fieldwork, which was difficult if not impossible to do before Gorbachev, several Western authors exaggerated the religiosity of Soviet Central Asians.[31] Some analysts apocalyptically predicted the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to European civilization, and they were joined by fearful Russians who imagined dangers from the "green crescent" that extended from the Caucasus through Central Asia and up the Volga.[32] But in fact in the post-Soviet period Islamic unity has proven illusory, and supranational civilizational identities based on religion have been far weaker than national and subnational identifications. Perhaps most surprising of all, there has been a remarkable attraction of post-Soviet peoples to other post-Soviet peoples, even Russians, rather than to non-Soviet foreign powers, and the fear that anti-Russian pogroms would follow the end of Soviet colonialism proved to be misplaced. Even though there is great wariness about the reimposition of colonial authority among Central Asians, this has not been reflected in intensely anti-Russian feeling.

Nationmaking in Central Asia has been a top-down, state-generated project, rather than a "natural" evolution up from language or culture. Language does not match up easily with nation in Central Asia, for the various Turkic languages of the region are closely related. "Classifying Central Asian Turkic languages/dialects," writes one specialist, "is rather like cutting soup."[33] Those Western analysts who believed that the linguistic ties among the Turkic-speaking peoples might unify them or create an affinity with the Turks of Anatolia failed to note that the languages of Central Asia are different enough from Anatolian Turkish that identity remains an intellectual conceit. Similarly, the connection between Iranian-language speakers, like the Tajiks, and Persians remains tenuous. Even after seventy years of an Uzbek republic, the linguistic homogenization of an Uzbek people remains incomplete. Uzbeks in the west speak a dialect close to that of Turkmen, while those in the east are easily understood by Kazakhs or Kyrgyz. One Central Asian people blends into another, sharing much in common -- religion, language, culture, and sense of place. What distinguishes them most clearly from one another are the Soviet constructed identities listed in their passports and the Soviet-made republics in which they live.

In pre-Soviet times the most prevalent identification for Central Asian native peoples was Muslim, an identity that remains salient today. Muslim in Central Asia is not a narrowly religious but a more inclusive cultural and even spatial identity, that is, something akin to "European" for many Westerners. "Being Muslim" involves some attachment to customary practices and distinction from being Russian. Armenians, Jews, Ukrainians, and Russians are generally lumped into a general category of European or Russian. Yet being Muslim is not so much an identification with all of Islam, for Tatars are seen as the same as Russians, but something closer to being Central Asian. In the self-conception of Central Asian Muslims family and community, the one related closely to the other, is central in their lives, and both

differences among Central Asian Muslims and a basic cultural unity is noted.[34] There is a sense that "Russians" have encroached upon the Muslim peoples.[35] Some Kazakhs and Turkmen to whom I have spoken feel even more strongly that Russians or the Soviet Union have obliterated their distinct culture, leaving them not only without voice but without tongue.

The identity "Muslim," then, must be understood broadly, as a vaguely and loosely formed identity, one with less religion and oppositional politics than many Western analysts had thought.[36] It was not generally counterposed to "Soviet" identity, as the work of Mark Saroyan shows.[37] While the Soviet state tried in many ways to eliminate Muslim identifications and replace them with national (Uzbek, Kazakh) and Soviet ones, their own practices reinforced national and Muslim identities and exaggerated differences between Central Asians and Russians.[38] In the end, like the use of Uzbek or Tajik, which may not distinguish one Muslim from another, the term Muslim was most often used to distinguish Muslim from non-Muslim, from Russian or European.[39]

Besides national, regional, and religious identities, yet another supranational identification retains power in Central Asia -- "Soviet" identity, not so much in the sense of an identification with the Soviet Union as a system or political project, but rather as a shared identity with a cosmopolitan Russian and Soviet culture. This much-neglected topic has fallen victim to the apparent success of national identities that, combined with the progressive weakening of the central Soviet state, led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of independent national states. The argument usually made is that the generalized Soviet identity promoted by Soviet authorities was artificial and imposed and proved far weaker than the more "natural," primordial identities of nationality. Yet Central Asians imbibed much of Soviet culture and thinking and were notable in not participating in massive nationalist or separatist movements in the late Soviet period. Here perhaps is one of the most insidious effects of empire. By subscribing to the Soviet discourse of civilization, progress, socialism, and development, Central Asians acquiesced to the idea that Muslim peoples were "backward," that they received "civilization" from Russia, and that (in perhaps an unacknowledged way) the imperial or colonial aspects of Soviet policy were justified for developmentalist reasons.[40] Rather than complete or passive acceptance, however, colonialized people may buy into the given hierarchies and dominant values while experiencing the burden and pain of an enforced inferiority. The most successful intellectuals and politicians were successful precisely because they knew Russian well and were otherwise competent in the Sovietized culture. But no matter how Russified Central Asians might be, they often experienced discrimination, particularly when they left the region to continue their education or serve in the Soviet army. With inadequate knowledge of their own histories, Central Asians experienced a sense of disconnection and subjugation, yet many did not feel particularly hostile to Soviet culture.[41] Indeed by the late Soviet period it was nearly impossible to sever surgically actually lived Central Asian culture from many aspects of Soviet culture.[42] A sense that they have been shaped by the Soviet experience (particularly for males who served in the army), with all the ambivalences attached, links Central Asians to Russia in complex ways and keeps them distant from Muslims outside the former Soviet Union who have had quite different social and political experiences.

UZBEKISTAN: INCLUSIVE IDENTITY IN AN AUTHORITARIAN STATE

The peoples of Central Asia were among the last of the Soviet peoples to adopt clearly differentiated "national" identities. Though Soviet Uzbek scholars sometimes claimed that the Uzbek "nation" reached back to the first millennium B.C. and perhaps even earlier, most analysts contend that Uzbek is a quintessentially modern identity and should properly be associated only with the twentieth-century Soviet and post-Soviet republics. In a careful study of Uzbek identities, anthropologist John Schoeberlein-Engel demonstrates that "the name 'Uzbek' entered Central Asia with the Shaybanid conquest in the 16th century" and was thereafter "associated with the several dynasties descended from the Shaybanids which ruled the Khanates until they lost their independence to Russia."[43] Uzbek came to mean those related to the ruling elites, soldiers of the conquering armies, and even the subjects of the Uzbek dynasties. They might speak Turkic or Tajik, be nomadic or settled, have strong tribal affiliations or not, and this sense of identification with Uzbek was relatively attenuated, had no sense of national identity, and was less firmly held than tribal, other lineage, or local regional identities. Peoples were distinguished less by language and more by whether they were sedentary or nomadic. Settled peoples were known as Sarts, while nomads were often called "Kazakhs."[44]

With the establishment of the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan in 1924 the identities of the population shifted dramatically. The category "Sart" was abolished; Turkic-speaking Sarts became Uzbeks; and Iranian-speaking Sarts became Tajiks. The linguistic identification cut across social lines, uniting some townspeople with nomads and villagers, while dividing the settled population into distinct

"nationalities."[45]   A host of identities with smaller Turkic groups -- the Lakays, Karluks, Kipchaks, Chaghatays -- and "Turk" itself were eliminated (and those people integrated into the Uzbeks), while Kazakh, Turkmen, and Karakalpak were retained.[46]

Uzbek, like Russian, can have the double meaning of nationality -- ethnicity on the one hand, citizenship on the other. Many visitors to Uzbekistan have noted that in cities like Samarkand the majority of people appear to be Tajik speakers, even though official Soviet census figures claim that the majority is Uzbek. Many Tajik speakers are listed as Uzbek on their passports and may, indeed, see themselves as Uzbek, in the sense of a member of the republic and the nation that inhabits its territory.[47] A number of "Tajiks" in Samarkand attempted to create a Tajik revival movement in 1989-90 and found themselves up against general indifference to the problem of official nationality even before their efforts were repressed by the Uzbekistan government.[48] "Neither the 'nation,' officially promoted "Özbek' [Uzbek] identity, nor the 'national minority,' 'Tâjik' identity have been particularly compelling for Samarqand Tâjik-speakers."[49] Though one should not exaggerate the cohesion and ubiquity of Uzbek national consciousness, what is most striking in Uzbekistan is that subnational and regional identities and the traditional attachment to supranational Islam have coexisted with an identification with the Uzbek nation and the Uzbek republic. To some extent the legacy of Soviet territorial nationhood has proven more powerful than older supranational identities, like Turkestan or Islam, that cut across the boundaries created in 1924, perhaps because the national has been institutionalized in administration and resource distribution. But even as post-Soviet authorities work to construct new national identities, they must recognize that an overlapping series of identities from neighbors to cities to tribes and ethnicities, on to nation, republic, and religion cohabitate quite effectively in independent Uzbekistan -- and, one may say, elsewhere in the Southern Tier.

Uzbekistan, then, is a relatively recent nation with a complex ethnic, religious, regional, and even Soviet layers of identity. Like most of the other Muslim republics, it had no popular nationalist mobilization against the Soviet regime, and Uzbeks voted nearly unanimously to remain within the USSR in the all-union referendum of March 1991. Ethnic violence in 1989 and 1990 was directed, not at Russians or the Soviet state, but at fellow Muslims – Meskhetian Turks who had been exiled by Stalin from Georgia; and Kyrgyz in the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan – and was largely the result of economic competition. The state authorities turned toward independence only after the abortive coup against Gorbachev in August 1991, and the old party elite essentially maintained its control of the republic through the 1990s, now free of Moscow's control. No revolution took place in Uzbekistan, and not much reform either. The Communists who became leaders of the nation systematically repressed or coopted any opposition. President Karimov promoted Uzbek national culture but restrained more chauvinistic efforts that might encourage badly needed skilled Russian workers to leave the republic. A huge statue of Timur stands in a central park in Tashkent where Lenin once stood. Though a Mongol, the conqueror of Central Asia, who is buried in Samarkand, has been appropriated into the Uzbek national tradition.

Yet as the Uzbek leadership develops a national Uzbek identity, it does so without great emphasis on ethnicity. Uzbek citizenship is open to all long-term residents of the republic, while at the same time proficiency in the Uzbek language is being encouraged. The official Uzbek literary language, based on the dialect of the Farghana Valley in the east, is not easily understood by all Uzbeks, and Russian, Tajik, and other Turkic languages are used by many citizens with little inconvenience.[50] Uzbek identity is broad and inclusive, reflecting the variety of peoples that became the Uzbek nationality in Soviet times. The combination of political authoritarianism and inclusive national identity has contributed, at least for the time being, to an enviable level of social stability.

TAJIKISTAN: OVERWHELMING THE NATIONAL IDENTITY

Tajikistan is ethnically heterogeneous. In the last Soviet census, in 1989, 3.1 million were listed as Tajiks, 1.2 million as Uzbeks, and about 400,000 "Europeans."[51] The republic was cobbled together from contiguous areas in which Persian speakers were numerically dominant, but the two principal Persian-speaking cities, Bukhara and Samarkand, were left in Uzbekistan, thus depriving the new state (only separated from Uzbekistan in 1929) from much of its intelligentsia. Tajiks are conventionally understood to be the Persian speakers of Central Asia, distinct and distant from the Turkic speakers, like the Uzbeks or Turkmen. But even this usage of the ethnonym is a relatively recent one. Before the nineteenth century "Tajik" referred to people who lived in oases and not to a particular linguistic group. Later it referred to city dwellers or to particular peoples in the mountains.[52] Over the years of Soviet power Tajiks in Uzbekistan were formally, statistically assimilated into the dominant Uzbek nationality, while in Tajikistan peoples who had had separate identities noted by ethnographers or census-takers were integrated over time into the Tajik nationality. Most dramatically, the Pamiri peoples (Shughnis, Yazulemis, Rushanis,

Ishkashimis, Wakhis, and others), many of whom had lived in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, founded in 1925, were eliminated as categories in the 1959 Soviet census. Despite the state's policy of assimilation, however, many of these Pamiris, who are Shiite Muslims unlike the Sunni Tajiks, insisted on "speaking Russian rather than Tâjik (which they often speak very badly) as an expression of their distinctness from the 'Tâjik' whom they sometimes view with condescension."[53] Although linguistic links to Iran might suggest some kind of identity with that country, in fact Shiite Iran and largely Sunni Tajikistan do not share a common identity.[54]

Like Georgia, Tajikistan fell apart in civil and ethnic wars, but the scale of the human tragedy was even greater in this Central Asian republic. Here the fragility of national identity and the reinvigoration of alternative political and regional identities were fundamental to the social breakdown, although, as in Georgia, particular discourses and leadership contributed to the turn toward violence.[55] People divided along lines of "ethnicity" (Uzbek versus Tajik versus Pamiri), along regional lines (Khojand and Kulab on one side, Karategin, Jurgan Teppe, and Pamir region on the other), as well as sociological lines (old Communist elite versus emerging intelligentsia).[56] The Tajik descent into civil war originated as a contest between Communist conservatives and a "democratic" opposition based in rival regions. One side in the political struggle was made up of the traditional Communist leaders with their complex networks of patrons and clients embedded in extended families, clans, and local relations, along with their Uzbek allies.[57] The Communists were prepared to promote and proclaim regional loyalties in any effort to gain support in the absence of any broader, more appealing program. The "socialist" system in Tajikistan had only a superficial relationship with anything resembling Marxism but rather was what Olivier Roy calls a "retraditionalization" of the Soviet economy. "The kolkhoz became the modern tribe, and the secretary of the Party the modern tribal leader. In fact, the communists were better adapted to this neotraditional society than the mullahs or the 'democrats.'"[58]

The opposition was a broad political coalition of cultural revivalist intellectuals (the Rastokhez movement), the Pamiris, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, and the Islamic Renaissance Party. The "common thread of this alliance was that it represented those who had long been excluded from the Communist party system of clientelism based on region."[59] The Tajik intelligentsia generally identified more with their regions than with Tajikistan as a whole, and the "democrats and nationalists recruited mainly from among the small university-educated intelligentsia who did not originate from the ruling districts of Kulab and Khojand."[60] Their hopes lay in capturing the presidency in the elections of fall 1991, but when that effort failed and an old Communist boss received a Soviet-style majority, the impossibility of working through the electoral process opened the way to renewed street demonstrations that began in earnest in March 1992 and continued into spring. Even more conservative Communists organized a military effort, manned by Kulabi militants, to bring down the government. In the ensuing fighting, it is estimated, 50,000 people perished, and another 10 percent of the population became refugees. The Kulabi-Khojandi forces, which had been receiving aid and support from Russia and Uzbekistan, drove the government from Dushanbe in November and established their own regime, headed by Imomali Rakhmonov. Gradually the Kulabis moved to push out the Khojandis and secure their own followers in government. Khojandis, who govern a district inhabited by many people who identify themselves as "Uzbeks," threatened to secede and join Uzbekistan. The turn from a democratic struggle into a war employing regional and ethnic identities employed shattered what was left of the weak Tajik national identification that the Soviets had attempted to build up. Tajikistan is a place where the collapse of the Soviet order, not so much defrosted old identities chilled by a repressive old regime, but rather opened up new opportunities for reconstructed regional and political identities around which conflict flared.

KAZAKHSTAN: CIVIC NATIONBUILDING IN A BINATIONAL STATE

Kazakhstan provides an example of a state with serious problems of national and political identity that has been able to negotiate provisional solutions. The Kazakhs have never been a majority in their own republic. In the northern parts of the republic bordering on Russia some 80 percent of the population is non-Kazakh, and many Russians hold that the northern Kazakh steppe and eastern Kazakhstan are rightly parts of Russia.[61] Kazakhstan's relatively smooth transition into independent statehood had neither Armenia's advantages of ethnic homogeneity and a broadbased and relatively united nationalist movement, nor Georgia's liability of a vociferous nationalism headed by a militant elected leader. Nazarbaev, the last Soviet Communist Party chief in Kazakhstan, was a confirmed Gorbachevite dedicated to the preservation of the Soviet Union and a gradualist transition to a more liberal society. Independence was thrust upon him and Kazakhstan when the three Slavic republics trilaterally left the USSR on December 8, 1991. As president of the new state he cautiously, skillfully maneuvered between Kazakhs, some of whom were

becoming more nationalistic, and Russians who were fearful about their future in the newly independent state.

Nazarbaev envisioned Kazakhstan both as the homeland of the Kazakhs, promoting the Kazakh language and a more national version of Kazakh history, and a multinational state in which all "Kazakhstanis" would have equal civil rights and opportunities. He suppressed virulent nationalists, punished Islamists (the so-called Wahabis), and agreed to slow down the shift to Kazakh language. Russian was recognized as an official language in the constitution of 1995, an apparent reversal of the 1989 law that established Kazakh as the official state language. The law on language of July 1997 seemed to confirm the status of both languages, on the one hand promoting the spread of Kazakh while on the other allowing Russian to be used in official capacities. "In carving out a foreign policy for his new state, Nazarbaev has stressed repeatedly that Kazakhstan will be neither eastern nor western, neither Islamic nor Christian; rather the state should be a bridge between both."[62] And in a bold move to cement northern and southern Kazakhstan under a single authority, Nazarbaev moved the capital from Almaty in the southeast to the forbidding town of Akhmola (later called Astana) in the northwest.[63] By transferring the capital 745 miles to the northwest the president sought to preempt potential Russian separatism and encourage Kazakh migration to the north.

Yet even as Nazarbaev's moderate, middle-of-the-road approach to nationality and foreign policy was being implemented, Kazakhstan steadily became more of a national state for the Kazakhs. Demographically the weight of the ethnic Kazakhs rose from 39.7 percent in 1989 to 46 percent in 1995. Within the highest levels of the state administration Kazakhs made up more than 74 percent by 1994. Still, Kazakhization has been slow. An influential part of the Kazakh population supports the nationalization process, but another part, highly Russified and urban, continues to send its children to Russian schools, as do nearly all non-Kazakhs.[64] Observers note, "Russian will remain the dominant language in this Central Asian state in the foreseeable future."[65] Kazakhstan remains a divided state with a dual identity, both as the homeland of the Kazakhs and a multinational republic. Nazarbaev's subtle and sensitive approach to nationality issues has defanged the possible conflict between Russians and Kazakhs to a large degree. And the Russian nationalist claim to parts of Kazakhstan is challenged by a powerful legacy from the Soviet period that recognizes the national republics as the legitimate homeland of the titular nationality. Still, structural, demographic, and economic factors provide potential causes for future confrontation. Histories of the region are still contested; identities both of territory and inhabitants remain fluid; but Kazakhstan's relative success in the last decade in avoiding serious violence can in large part be attributed to a leadership adept at deploying discourses and policies that blur differences and lessen tensions.

Conclusion

The cases selected for this article have all been about states that engaged in ostensible transitions from more authoritarian to more democratic systems. Some have ended up in civil and ethnic war, others in relatively peaceful transformations, still others remain locked in the grip of old leaders. These studies show how an exclusivist national identity of the dominant nationality in an ethnically mixed republic led to interethnic and civil violence and destroyed a state (Georgia); how a highly coherent national identity in an ethnically homogeneous republic contributed to peaceful transition and an effective military effort (Armenia); how a weak national identity in an ethnically divided republic resulted in a weak state and military defeat (Azerbaijan); how a weak national identity in a relatively homogeneous republic was unable to prevent regional division and civil war (Tajikistan); and how an effective inclusive civic national identity in ethnically heterogeneous states contributed to interethnic peace (Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan). In a number of these cases (Azerbaijan and Tajikistan), nationalism proved a weak source of mobilization. In others (Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan) the experienced or expected costs of ethnic nationalism led pragmatic leaders to avoid a vociferous ethnonationalism or a turn toward Islamism and to support officially a civic national identity.

As should be evident in the above discussion of South Caucasia and Central Asia, current identities and antagonisms should not be seen as simply the reemergence from slumber of atavistic, repressed, or primordial identities and conflicts. Rather in the late-Soviet and post-Soviet period older selectively revived or reconstituted identities compete with identities of relatively recent origin. In the post-Soviet environment some older identities, for example, those associated with Georgian Social Democracy of the first Georgian republic (1918-21), may be missing altogether. Second, post-Soviet identities have shifted rapidly in the last decade, generally from more nationalist and exclusivist to more tolerant and inclusive, although in some cases, like Armenia, a powerful isolationist nationalism overwhelmed attempts to create a more cosmopolitan discourse. Within limits elites can choose among the

repertoire of available identities and discourses to promote interethnic peace or exacerbate conflict. But constrained by popular understandings, they challenge discursive boundaries at their own peril. Aliev cannot easily give up Karabakh or base Russian troops on Azerbaijani territory. Nor can Shevardnadze agree to independence for Abkhazia. But both leaders might propose federalism and shared sovereignty as possible solutions to seemingly intractable conflicts. The question for each of those men is whether they can reshape state and national identities and discourses about the Other and find some intermediate resolution to debilitating discord. Occasionally a leader like Nazarbaev pushes against the grain and successfully reconstructs identities. This might be called statesmanship. But at other times a leader like Ter Petrosian falters when congealed attitudes about the ethnic Other preclude accommodation and compromise.

State leaders in new states with evolving national identities face a serious dilemma at the beginning of the new millennium. The absence of an effective, unifying national identity in a political world in which nations are the source of legitimacy for states generally contributes to state weakness and the greater possibility for instability and violence. In a discursive universe of normative nationalism and an international system in which nation and state are welded together, political communities that identify as nations can be more easily mobilized around issues of "national" defense, "national" honor or pride, "national" survival, as if the victory or defeat of the state would mean the life or death of the cultural community. The experiences of Russia and the Southern Tier demonstrate that with all the dangers that certain national identities and national discourses may present, some kind of coherent national identity is in the present political environment indispensable for state builders.

Why and at what moments discourses and identities might shift or be changed are questions that can only be answered with reference to particular cases. This article suggests conditions under which such effective discursive shifts might occur. First, in conditions of uncertainty and instability leaders have unprecedented opportunities to choose among available identities. The easy choice of ethnonationalism is not a foregone conclusion, for in several cases, like post-Gamsakhurdia Georgia, Karimov's Uzbekistan, or Nazarbaev's Kazakhstan, leaders might calculate that greater chances for stability lie in policies of inclusion and tolerance. Second, the defeats suffered by chauvinistic policies have a sobering effect on leaders and populations, as in Georgia, and contribute to reconsideration of national identities. But correspondingly successes by nationalists reinforce their choice of ethnonationalism, as in Armenia, and limit the political discussion by progressively excluding those who do not conform to a narrow definition of the nation. Third, although the demands of state building require some conception of the national community, and although an ethnic criterion for membership may at first glance appear to be the easy road to political cohesion and mobilization, in fact recognition of the ethnic diversity of the polity and calculation of the costs of enforcing ethnic homogenization may encourage some politicians to choose a broader definition of citizenship, as in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Ethnonationalism is an option that, like revolution is highly unpredictable and may lead to debilitating social violence, as evidenced by Georgia – not to mention Yugoslavia. A sober politician, like Azerbaijan's Aliev, might choose a cool pragmatism rather than risk stirring the pot of ethnic emotions. On the other hand, creating a civic nation, which lacks the emotional and affective association with a historically-constituted cultural community, may be much harder to sell to a population already steeped in ethnic politics..

The claim of this article is that the ways in which policymakers and opinion shapers see the world has profound effects on the constitution of that world. Elite choices are key to determining political identifications, but as several cases in this article demonstrate they can be made only within certain discursive limits. In contrast to some neorealist theories, the constructivist approach presented here proposes that recognition of the centrality of identities, representations, and discourses is key to evaluating the conditions for conflict or cooperation. Rather than seeing conflict arising from power imbalances, such as exist between Russia and the other post-Soviet states, or making an automatic assumption that "another group's sense of identity and the cohesion it produces, is a danger," that will lead to conflict, this approach suggests that threat perception is linked closely to identities of self and the Other, that identities and images of the Other can be changed, and that, therefore, the security dilemma can be avoided.[66] Mere proximity of a mammoth state to much smaller ones does not necessarily lead to imperialism or even hegemony, for the actual relations between states depend on the forms of national identity and discourse, the perceived threats that follow from the way the world is imagined on all sides, as well as distributions of power and resources. Analysts must be wary of the "creeping essentialism" that invades much of the writing on post-Cold War conflict. Not only are nations and cultural communities arenas of contestation and debate, with internal divisions and differences, and shared commonalities with those they distinguish themselves against, but

even more so are such hybrid conglomerates as "civilizations." A world as clear, crisply delineated, and differentiated by bright colors as a Rand McNally map, with nations and civilizations homogenized and coherent within and radically different at the points where they bump up against one another, may be nothing more than a figment of imagination.

Ronald Grigor Suny is Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago and the author of <u>The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union</u> (Stanford, 1993), <u>The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States</u> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), and other books.

[1] Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994), pp. 44-76; and Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 22-29. For the critique of ethnic essentialism, see Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I Rudolph, "Modern Hate, *New Republic*, March 23, 1993, pp. 24-29.

[2] Michael R. Gordon, "Post Communist Russia Plumbs Its Soul, in Vain, for New Vision," *New York Times*, March 31, 1998, pp. A1, A6.

[3] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Spring (1992), p. 405. The suggestion by Stephen M. Walt that "states ally to balance against threats rather than against power alone" is adopted here, with the understanding that threat is a matter of perception and depends on how identities and interests are constructed. [Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 5.

[4] The argument here that empirically sensitive work is required to understand identities has also been made in reference to interests by David Sanders, who writes: "Interests need to be considered in their historical context. Before we can speculate intelligently either about the formation of interests or about the consequences of states having conflicting or overlapping interests, we need to know what states' leaders perceive their respective states' interests to be. This can only be achieved through extensive, laborious, and difficult empirical study…. In the analysis of nation-state interests, at least for the time being, we desperately need a little less theoretically based deduction and a little more empirically based induction." Sanders, "International Relations: Neo-realism and Neo-liberalism," in Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds., *A New Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 432-433.

[5] Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 27-28. Posen emphasizes that the security dilemma is particularly important in the conditions of anarchy that are created when multiethnic empires collapse and new states are being built. The need for "groupness," national identity, to mobilize armies to fight for the new state is met by ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic collectivities. "Unless proven otherwise, one group is likely to assume that another group's sense of identity, and the cohesion that it produces, is a danger." Ibid., p. 31.

[6] For an excellent example of a multivariant analysis, see Rajan Menon and Hendrik Spruyt, "The Limits of Neorealism: Understanding Security in Central Asia," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, Issue/Part 1 (January 1999), pp. 87-105.

[7] Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," pp. 27-47; Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994), pp. 5-39; Jack Snyder, "Nationalism and the Crisis of the Post-Soviet State," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 5-26; and V.P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 130-166.

[8] For an appreciative statement of the constructivist approach, see Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer 1998), pp. 171-200.

[9] Ibid., p. 176. Similarly Wendt points out, "Identities are the basis of interests. Actors do not have a 'portfolio' of interests that they carry around independent of social context; instead, they define their interests in the process of defining situations." Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," p. 398.

[10] The phrase is from an earlier version of Hopf's article, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory."

[11] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Press, 1983; 2ᵈ ed., 1991); Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); and E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) have been recognized as among the key texts in this discussion. See also the essays collected in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Becoming National, A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[12] On the reconstructions of Armenian history, see Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); on Georgia, Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, 2d ed., 1994); on the Jews, Maxime

Rodinson, *Cult, Ghetto, and State: The Persistence of the Jewish Question* (Thetford, Norfolk: Al Saqi Books, 1983).

[13] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Duara, "Historicizing National Identity, or Who Imagines What and When," in Eley and Suny, eds., *Becoming National*, pp. 151-177.

[14] Igor Chubais, "From the Russian Idea to the Idea of a New Russia: How We Must Overcome the Crisis of Ideas," Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project, John F. Kennedy School of Government, (Cambridge, MA, July 1998), p. 1.

[15] *Sovok* (plural, *sovki*) literally means "dustpan," but in the late Soviet period it referred negatively to something or someone "Soviet." It has come to be an ambivalent reference to a Soviet person.

[16] Ronald Grigor Suny, "The State of Nations: The Ex-Soviet Union and Its Peoples," *Dissent*, Summer 1996, pp. 90-98.

[17] Vera Tolz, "Conflicting 'Homeland Myths' and Nation-State Building in Postcommunist Russia," Slavic Review, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Summer 1998), p. 268.

[18] Ibid., p. 289.

[19] Ibid., p. 293.

[20] Ibid., p. 294.

[21] The term "South Caucasia" refers to that isthmus that lies between the Black and Caspian Seas and to the south of the range of the Great Caucasus Mountains. Traditionally, this region was called Transcaucasia, a reference that implied the view from Russia in the north.

[22] Menon and Spruyt make the point that a benign Russia is contingent on internal democratization and greater stability of Russia's neighboring states. Should Russia become politically authoritarian in combination with instability on its borders, the likely outcome would be a neo-imperial Russia. Menon and Spruyt, "The Limits of Neorealism," pp. 96-97.

[23] This point was suggested to me by Ted Hopf.

[24] I use the term "cultural sphere" instead of "civilization" to indicate the soft boundaries between peoples and their sharing of cultural features, in contrast to the sense in which Huntington employs "civilization," which emphasizes the abrupt differences between cultures at the margins and the likelihood of clashes.

[25] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993).

[26] In a visit to Karabakh in the summer of 1997 the author noted that the local Armenians referred to Azerbaijanis exclusively as "the Turks." Azeri is, of course, a Turkic language, but the appellation "Turk" in this context was a transference of the qualities of Ottoman Turks to present-day Azerbaijanis, rather than a reference to linguistic affiliations.

[27] The contrasting patterns of transition from Soviet to post-Soviet regimes in the southern Caucasus is discussed in Ronald Grigor Suny, "Elite Transformation in Late-Soviet and Post-Soviet Transcaucasia, or What Happens When the Ruling Class Can't Rule?" in Timothy J. Colton and Robert C. Tucker, eds., *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), pp. 141-167.

[28] As the leading Western historian of modern Azerbaijan, Tadeusz Swietochowski, writes, "In 1905 Azerbaijan was still merely a geographical term describing a stretch of land partitioned between Russia and Persia. The only articulated group identity of its inhabitants was that of being Muslim, and their collective consciousness expressed itself primarily in terms of the universalistic 'umma." The secular intelligentsia that developed in Baku and Tiflis in the mid- and late-nineteenth century adopted the term azarbayjanli (Azerbaijani) for the local Muslims and worked to instill a national, rather than a purely religious, identity. With Turkish backing they formed the briefly independent Republic of Azerbaijan (1918-20) toward the end of World War I. Yet "while the intelligentsia experienced an evolution that took it in quick succession from Pan-Islamism to Turkism to Azerbaijanism, the masses remained on the level of 'umma consciousness with its typical indifference to secular power, foreign or native." Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 191, 193.

[29] Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 222.

[30] Personal conversation with the author.

[31] See, for example, Alexandre A. Bennigsen and Marie Bennigsen Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (New York: St. Martin's, 1983); and Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the*

Soviet Empire: A Guide (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt, trans. Martin Sokolinsky and Henry A. la Farge (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), pp. 244-265. For critical and sensitive discussions of these issues, see Elizabeth E. Bacon, Central Asians under Russian Rule: A Study in Culture Change (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966); Michael Rywkin, Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1982); and Jo-Ann Gross, Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992).

[32] Alexei Malashenko, "Does Islamic Fundamentalism Exist in Russia?" in Yaacov Ro'i (ed.), Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp. 41-51; Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of the Nations, trans. Franklin Philip (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 268-270.

[33] John Schoeberlein-Engel, "Identity in Central Asia: Construction and Contention in the Conceptions of 'Özbek,' 'Tâjik,' 'Muslim,' Samarqandi,' and Other Groups" Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1994, p. 58.

[34] Ibid., p. 225.

[35] Ibid., p. 230.

[36] "Islam has been and continues to be a major source of identity among the Muslims of Central Asia. But the manner in which religious identity is shaped and reshaped, the meaning of religious affiliation, the understanding of religiously based identities is only one aspect of a complex of identities which are not closed, uni-dimensional, unchanging categories." Gross, Muslims in Central Asia, p. 16.

[37] The Muslim clergy in the Soviet Union, Saroyan argues, had its own agenda and were "engaged in a creative process of constructing new forms of identity and religious organization in order to situate and establish itself and its community in a complex set of constantly changing power relations. The repressive means by which the Muslim clergy constitutes itself and its image of the Muslim community are much more relevant to its aspirations for hegemony in Muslim society than to its relations with state authorities." Saroyan, *Minorities, Mullahs, and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Edward W. Walker (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, International and Area Studies, 1997), pp. 25-26.

[38] Recent work by anthropologists and visitors to the region indicates that commitment to Islam varied greatly over the span of Turkestan, and Soviet policies effectively eroded popular devotion, although a lingering identification with the Muslim world and Islam as a culture remains and is being actively promoted. In Uzbekistan it is not the cities that exhibit devotion to Islam, and certainly not the urban intelligentsia (which is the most Russified and secular part of the population), but certain distinct regions like the Farghana Valley and the mountain villagers in the Hisar-Zarafshan ranges.

[39] Schoberlein-Engel sums up the connection between nationality and religion by noting, "All that can really be said is that 'Özbeks,' with few exceptions, are 'Muslims,' and that this has three broad meanings for 'Özbeks' as for other Central Asians: 1) They believe in the basic tenets of Islamic religion, such as that 'there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet'; 2) They adhere to traditional practices and beliefs associated with Islam; And 3) they are 'native' to this fundamentally 'Muslim' part of the world, in contrast to the Russians and others who are viewed in Central Asia as outsiders." Schoeberlein-Engel, "Identity in Central Asia," p. 50.

[40] Ibid., p. 248.

[41] Ibid., p. 250.

[42] Years after the collapse of Soviet power, in the town of Dzhambul in Kazakhstan, I watched Kazakh newlyweds reverently lay flowers at the monument to the "Great Fatherland War." When questioned about this invented Soviet tradition, the local people saw no reason to forgo what for them was a custom hallowed by years of practice. For them it was not something "constructed," but part of a primordialized past.

[43] John Schoeberlein-Engel, "The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity," *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 2 (1996), p. 13.

[44] Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 2d ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1995); and Edward A. Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks, from the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1990).

[45] Schoeberlein-Engel, "The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity," p. 14.

[46] In his own field work, Schoeberlein-Engel found that some of the identities that had been officially abolished seventy years earlier survived the Soviet period. Kipchaks in the Ferghana Valley continue to

see themselves as a separate people, closer to the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs than to the non-Kipchak Uzbeks, whom they still refer to as "Sarts." Vertical identities with ethnic connotations also continue to exist. Khojas are people who see themselves as descendants of important religious figures and marry within the group of Khojas, even though they may speak different languages.

[47] Schoeberlein-Engel's field work indicates that "the great majority of Tajik-speakers in Samarqand are apparently quite accepting of their position in Uzbekistan and have even come to adopt a kind of superficial Uzbek identity. The notion that Tajik identity in Samarqand is inherently destabilizing for Uzbekistan is an assumption which is not borne out by experience." Ibid., p. 19.

[48] Ibid., p. 218.

[49] Ibid., p. 219.

[50] Gregory Gleason, "Uzbekistan: The Politics of National Independence," in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 583-584.

[51] Although not listed separately, it is estimated that Pamiris numbered approximately 200,000. Olivier Roy, *The Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes and Implications: A Report of the Study Group on the Prospects for Conflict and Opportunities for Peacemaking in the Southern Tier of Former Soviet Republics* (Washington, D. C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993), p. 9.

[52] Schoeberlein-Engel, "Identity in Central Asia," pp. 118; 123-153.

[53] Ibid., p. 133.

[54] Roy, *The Civil War in Tajikistan*, p. 15.

[55] "Although the civil war is also fueled by ideological and strategic objectives, the main domestic factor seems to be a lack of common Tajik identity and a common will to build a unified Tajik state, in contrast to an increasing Uzbek ethnic assertiveness." Ibid., p. 11]

[56] Ibid.

[57] The Communist elite had strong local bases in Leninabad Province (the capital of which is Khojand) and Kulab Province, as well as an ethnic coloration, because Leninabad is an area that is either Uzbek or "Uzbekicized" and somewhat "Russian" in culture. Pamiris were generally excluded from high party positions.

[58] Ibid., p. 22.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., p. 23.

[61] Martha Brill Olcott, "Kazakhstan: Pushing for Eurasia," in Bremmer and Taras, *New States, New Politics*, pp. 554-555.

[62] Ibid., p. 557.

[63] David Hoffman, "The Long Road to Akmola: Is Nazarbayev Tilting at Windmills?" *CERA Decision Brief*, June 1997, pp. 1-7.

[64] It is estimated that in September 1996 just over 40 percent of Kazakhs were sending their children to Russian schools. Pål Kolstø and Irina Malkova, "Is Kazakhstan Being Kazakhified?" *Analysis of Current Events*, IX, 11 (November 1997), p. 4.

[65] Ibid.

[66] The language quoted here is from Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," p. 31.