

University of California, Berkeley

Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies  
Institute of International Studies  
Center for Slavic and East European Studies

Annual Caucasus Conference

***Institutions, Identity, and Ethnic Conflict in the Caucasus***

May 3, 1997

The Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, the Institute of International Studies, and the Center for Slavic and East European Studies at UC Berkeley invite you to a conference entitled **Institutions, Identity, and Ethnic Conflict in the Caucasus**. This free, all-day public conference will take place at UC Berkeley on Saturday, May 3, 1997.

Nationalism, ethnopolitics, and ethnic conflict have been important topics for social scientists trying to explain the character of politics in the post-Cold War era. Nowhere have these issues been more important than in the three Transcaucasian states, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, and in the North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation.

The Caucasus is extraordinarily diverse, with a rich and complicated history. Some fifty languages are native to the region. Along with this linguistic diversity is a diversity of ethnically-defined "autonomous areas" (Abkhazia, Adygeya, Adzharia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessiya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Nakhichevan, North Ossetia, and South Ossetia). The borders of these autonomous areas often do not coincide with the actual territorial distribution of ethnic groups, and many have conflicting territorial claims.

The combination of extreme ethnic diversity, administrative recognition of certain minority peoples but not others, and competing territorial claims accounts in part for the political violence and instability in the region since the late 1980s. The first sustained conflict between nationalities of the former Soviet Union occurred in the Caucasus in 1988 when Armenians and Azeris began fighting over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. In the period since, violent conflicts have broken out in Abkhazia, Chechnya, South Ossetia, Nakhichevan, and Adzharia, and between Ingush and Ossetians in North Ossetia. At the same time, Georgia and Azerbaijan have witnessed virtual civil wars between factions of titular nationalities.

The resulting political instability and violence in the Caucasus has been a considerable security concern for the West, including the United States. This is especially due to the risk that conflicts in the region will draw in regional powers such as Russia, Turkey, and Iran, and because of the vast oil and gas reserves in the Caspian Sea region.

Please join us for what we hope will prove an exciting and informative event.

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Panel 1: Chechnya and the North Caucasus

John B. Dunlop (Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University): “Prelude to Conflict: Bilateral Negotiations Between Moscow and Grozny, 1992-94”

Paula Garb (Professor of Anthropology, UC Irvine): “Ethnicity, Alliance Building, and the Limited Spread of Violence in the North Caucasus”

Gail W. Lapidus (Senior Fellow, Center for International Security and Arms Control, Stanford University):  
Chechnya in Regional Comparative Perspective

Johanna Nichols (Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures, UC Berkeley): “War and the Politics of Non-Natural Language Endangerment in the Caucasus”

Panel 2: Georgia and the Abkhaz Crisis

Catherine Dale (Department of Political Science, UC Berkeley): “The Politics of Representation in the Abkhaz Conflict”

Ghia Nodia (Visiting Scholar, UC Berkeley; Chairman of the Board, Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development, Tbilisi): “Nationalism and Subnationalisms in Georgia”

Ronald G. Suny (Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago): “Fragments and Forms: National and Supranational Identities in Georgia”

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