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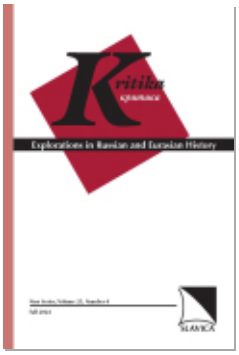

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Hubertus Jahn, ed., *Identities and Representations in Georgia from the 19th Century to the Present*. 206 pp. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021. ISBN-13 978-3110659276. $73.89.

Tinatin Japaridze, *Stalin's Millennials: Nostalgia, Trauma, and Nationalism*. 180 pp. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2022. ISBN-13 978-1793641861. $109.80.

Claire P. Kaiser, *Georgian and Soviet: Entitled Nationhood and the Specter of Stalin in the Caucasus*. 294 pp. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023. ISBN-13 978-1501766794. $43.19.

In 1956, then chairman of the Department of Soviet History at Tbilisi State University Giorgi Khachapuridze published the monograph *The Struggle of the Georgian People for Soviet Power*.[1] He argued that the Sovietization of Georgia in 1921 unleashed a process of national consolidation: Soviet power did not contest the long and fabled history of *sakartvelo* (Georgia) but on the contrary overcame its fractures by ensuring unified national development. As the Soviet Union began to unravel in the late 1980s, Georgia's nationalist intelligentsia consciously and openly opposed this historical framework. Medieval Georgian kingdoms and, eventually, the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918–21) became idyllic reference points

[1] Giorgi Khachapuridze, *Biobibliograp'ia* (Tbilisi: Mec'niereba, 1980); Giorgi Khachapuridze, *Bor´ba gruzinskogo naroda za ustanovlenie sovetskoi vlasti* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1956).

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of a romantic, independent, and mythologized pre-Soviet statehood. By the 2000s, politicians, media, academics, and the burgeoning NGO sector widely articulated the country's "return to Europe" and transitional process of "catching up" with the West in historical terms.[2] These narratives framed the Georgian SSR (1921–91) as a period of Soviet occupation, collective victimization, and interruption of Georgia's historical European destiny. State-driven memory politics have been largely guided by this narrative ever since. However, a critical reading of three recent studies on identity, nationhood, and memory in Georgia, along with a broader historiography on Soviet nationalities, exposes some of the latent tensions between anti-Soviet memory politics in Georgia and the history of national consolidation in the Georgian SSR.

Identities and Representations in Georgia from the 19th Century to the Present, edited by Hubertus Jahn, is a collection of essays by multiple authors focusing on Georgian national identity in the imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet eras. *Georgian and Soviet: Entitled Nationhood and the Specter of Stalin in the Caucasus* by Claire P. Kaiser examines the development of Soviet Georgian nationhood, while *Stalin's Millennials: Nostalgia, Trauma, and Nationalism* by Tinatin Japaridze explores how Georgia's unreconciled Soviet past and Stalin's legacy shape social and historical memory. These three books each engage with the historical complexities of Georgia's modern national development.

Unlike Vladimir Lenin, Lev Trotskii, or Nikolai Bukharin, the early writings of the Georgian Bolshevik Josef Jughashvili (Stalin) were shaped by the intricate ethnoterritorial landscape of the South Caucasus (Kaiser, 29).[3] Stalin's 1913 text *Marxism and the National Question* argued for the

[2] The Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918–21) has a mixed place in Georgia's post-Soviet memory regime. The flag and constitution of the First Republic were initially reinstated in post-Soviet Georgia. However, during Saakashvili's presidency (2003–12) the history of the social democratic First Republic was deemphasized because of the state's ideological hostility to socialism. The flag of the First Republic was changed into one that celebrates Christianity. Mikheil Saakashvili and Kakha Bendukidze, "Georgia: The Most Radical Catch-up Reforms," in *The Great Rebirth: Lessons from the Victory of Capitalism over Communism*, ed. A. Aslund and S. Djankov (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2014), 149–65; Donnacha Ó Beacháin and Frederik Coene, "Go West: Georgia's European Identity and Its Role in Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Objectives," *Nationalities Papers* 42, 6 (2014): 923–41.

[3] Growing up in Georgia on the Russian Empire's periphery shaped Stalin's personal and political development. See Ron Suny, *Stalin: Passage to Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020).

territorialization and noncultural regional autonomy of postimperial, socialist nations. The text, in part, responded to Noe Jordania. Before assuming leadership of the nominally independent Democratic Republic of Georgia (DRG) in 1918, Jordania was a figurehead of Georgian social democracy. The Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer's writings on the national question deeply influenced him.[4] While Jordania initially opposed including organizations representing nonterritorially concentrated nations, such as the Jewish Bund, in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), by 1912 he argued for extraterritorial national cultural autonomy, meaning national cultural rights should extend beyond nationally ascribed borders. Stalin countered that this approach could threaten the rights of smaller and territorially compact groups like Megrelians, Abkhaz, Adjarans, Ossetians, and Svans in a multiethnic region like Georgia.[5]

The Menshevik-aligned leadership of the DRG and Georgian Bolsheviks came from a shared Marxist milieu before 1917. While the two factions struggled for influence in all-Russian, Transcaucasian, and Georgian social democratic circles, especially after 1905, political differences were not always clearly defined. Factionalism in Georgia paralleled the Menshevik-Bolshevik split in all-Russian RSDLP institutions, yet local conditions in the Caucasus shaped the tactics, political visions, constituencies, and even origins of tensions among and between revolutionaries. This in part explains how the dominant wing of Georgian social democrats became "the most Bolshevik of the Mensheviks" by, among other things, embracing terrorism.[6]

Not long after Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd in October 1917, the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic was hastily established by Armenian and Azerbaijani nationalists, and Mensheviks in Georgia.[7] It collapsed after one month in May 1918. Although independence was not an initial aim, the DRG was declared in Tiflis on 26 May 1918. Longstanding splits from the intertwined all-Russian, Transcaucasian, and Georgian social democratic movements now manifested as serious fractures in a shared yet territorially unresolved political space amid civil war.

[4] Suny, *Stalin*, 525.

[5] Suny, *Stalin*, 527.

[6] Eric van Ree, "Reluctant Terrorists? Transcaucasian Social-Democracy, 1901–1909," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, 1 (2008): 127–54; Stephen Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883–1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[7] Adrian Brisku and Timothy K. Blauvelt, "Who Wanted the TDFR? The Making and the Breaking of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic," *Caucasus Survey* 8, 1 (2020): 1–8.

As relations soured, on 7 May 1920 the Bolshevik-led Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR) and the DRG signed a fleeting agreement that the historian Vadim Mukhanov describes as a "peaceful respite between opposing parties … a temporary ceasefire."[8] After the successful Sovietization of Azerbaijan in late April 1920, Lenin and the RSFSR leadership pushed for strategic accommodation of the anti-Bolshevik DRG in part to focus military resources elsewhere. Sergo Orjonikidze, the leading Georgian Bolshevik in the Russian Communist Party's Caucasus Bureau (Kavburo), persistently argued throughout 1920 for Red Army troops to seize Tiflis.[9]

On 25 February 1921 they did. Orjonikidze, architect of Sovietization in the South Caucasus, wrote to Lenin that day that: "The Red flag of Soviet power is flying over Tbilisi. Long live Soviet Georgia!."[10] By the end of March 1921, Georgia was entirely Sovietized. As most DRG state institutions and their employees shifted into Soviet ones, the political leadership fled to France, establishing a government in exile to oppose what they called "the Soviet occupation of Georgia.."[11] There are many reasons why Lenin ultimately supported the goal of Orjonikidze and other Georgian Bolsheviks in removing their long-standing political rivals from power and ensuring that Georgia joined the new revolutionary union.[12] The weak and unstable DRG sought political, economic, and military patronage from Western imperial powers (Germany and Britain in particular) and had "become a stable base for various anti-Soviet forces."[13] Persistent territorial and border

[8] Vadim Mukhanov, "From the Mountains to the Plains: Establishing Soviet Rule in Armenia and Azerbaijan (1920)," in *The Global Impacts of Russia's Great War and Revolution*, book 1: *The Arc of Revolution, 1917–24*, ed. Alexander Marshall, John W. Steinberg, and Steven Sabol (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2019), 383.

[9] Mukhanov, "From the Mountains to the Plains," 371–95.

[10] Vadim Mukhanov, "The Sovietization of Georgia in 1921," in *Global Impacts of Russia's Great War and Revolution*, 423. Telegram quoted from original source: G. K. Orjonikidze, *Izbrannye stat´i i rechi (1911–1937)* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1939), 98.

[11] The "Soviet Occupation" narrative was maintained by Georgian émigrés opposed to the Georgian SSR between 1921 and 1991. See Constantin Kandelaki, *The Georgian Question before the Free World (Acts—Documents—Evidence)* (Paris: MW Books 1953; trans. from French); and Elene Kekelia, "National Memory in Exile: The Case of the Georgian Émigré Community, 1921–2018," *Nations and Nationalism* 29, 1 (2023): 246–63. For more on Georgian emigration, see the work of Shorena Murusidze (https://manuscript.academia.edu/ShorenaMurusidze) and Georges Mamulia (https://independent.academia.edu/GeorgesMamoulia). On the collaboration between Georgian nationalists and Nazi Germany during World War II, see Giorgi Mamulia, *Gruzinskii legion vermakhta* (Moscow: Veche, 2011). On anti-Soviet emigres during the Cold War, see Benjamin Tromly, *Cold War Exiles and the CIA: Plotting to Free Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[12] Mukhanov, "The Sovietization of Georgia in 1921," 398, 413.

[13] Mukhanov, "The Sovietization of Georgia in 1921," 397.

issues, unyielding conflicts with national minorities, and the long-standing political cleavage with (and domestic persecution of) Bolshevism deepened by the DRG leadership's mutation into what the historian Francis King calls "improbable nationalists" were all factors.[14] These compounding realities exacerbated geostrategic and material concerns for the Bolsheviks. In the wake of Western military intervention into the Russian Civil War, the issue about which powers would, or could, access Georgia's Black Sea coastline and territory became more pressing. Controlling Baku oil and its transit on the Baku-Batumi oil pipeline through Georgia proved politically and economically indispensable, especially to Bolsheviks operating in the South Caucasus. Despite Soviet-British trade negotiations beginning in 1920, British military plans in this geopolitically strategic region remained opaque to Soviet leadership.[15] Similarly, formalizing internal and external borders in the South Caucasus was a precondition to ensuring cooperative regional integration and demarcating clear national boundaries of Georgia in the face of looming Turkish territorial claims.

As the first and only people's commissar of nationalities (1917–23), Stalin reiterated a defense of national-territorial autonomy at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921. A territorial approach to socialist nationhood, he argued, would facilitate modernization and eliminate the "backwardness" of nations lagging behind central Russia.[16] Larger nationalities like Armenians and Georgians were understood as historically oppressed by tsarism, yet still considered "developed" relative to smaller "backward" national groups.[17] Understanding Georgians as a developed nationality meant something different to Lenin than it did to Stalin. Lenin initially expressed concerns that Sovietizing Georgia would amount to a thinly veiled

[14] Francis King, "Improbable Nationalists? Social Democracy and National Independence in Georgia 1918–21," *Socialist History* 54 (2019): 35–60.

[15] The Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement was signed on 16 March 1921, after Georgia's Sovietization. Mukhanov, "The Sovietization of Georgia in 1921," 397; Sarah G. Brinegar, *Power and the Politics of Oil in the Soviet South Caucasus: Periphery Unbound, 1920–29* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023).

[16] By 1920, before the aborted RSFSR-DRG treaty, Jordania regarded Bolshevism as "backward," claiming "Bolshevik-Turkish imperialism" would tear Georgia away from Europe and democracy and place it into the "claws of fanatics from Asia," reinforcing a cultural-civilizational view of Europe. At the 1920 Bolshevik Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku (attended by Filipp Makharadze), Jordania's Europeanism was discussed and critiqued, viewed as an expression of the Second International's political support for Western imperialism instead of anticolonialism in the East. Noe Jordania, "What Bolshevism Means," *Georgian Mail*, 12 May 1920, N41; *Congress of the Peoples of the East: Baku, September 1920* (Oak Park, MI: New Park Publications 1977), 96; Jeremy Smith *Red Nations: The Nationality Experience in and after the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[17] Suny, *Stalin*, 527; Kaiser, *Georgian and Soviet*, 14, 28.

policy of Great Russian chauvinism. However, Stalin and Orjonikidze viewed Sovietization as necessary to counter the Georgian chauvinism embodied by the DRG. Inter-Bolshevik disagreements also manifested in the 1922 "Georgian Affair."[18] Georgian Bolshevik leaders like Polikarp Mdivani and Filipp Makharadze actively opposed perceived reductions in autonomy that the Georgian SSR's incorporation into the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR) would entail.[19] The ultimate political victory of Stalin and Orjonikidze over Lenin and the Georgian national deviationists shaped the trajectory of how the entire Soviet federal structure would develop.

The three newly established Soviet Republics in the South Caucasus—Azerbaijan SSR (1920), Armenian SSR (1920), and Georgian SSR (1921)—were unified together as the TSFSR in 1922. One of the four founding republics of the Soviet Union, the subfederal TSFSR was created primarily to consolidate Soviet rule and facilitate regional economic integration.[20] Led by Orjonikidze, Tiflis (Tbilisi after 1936) became the capital of the TSFSR and was, despite political centralization, from then on empowered in ways that defied a simple center-periphery arrangement vis-à-vis the all-Soviet capital, Moscow.

One indication was the establishment of subrepublican territories. In the 1921 Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Kars, the Black Sea region of Adjara was ceded to the Georgian SSR in exchange for the Artvin district.[21] Adjara was declared an autonomous republic on religious grounds, recognizing the Georgian-speaking Muslim Adjarans. In 1922, South Ossetia was designated as an autonomous oblast within the Georgian SSR, a compromise to settle recent Ossetian-Georgian fighting.[22] Multinational Abkhazia was originally incorporated into the TSFSR as a "treaty republic" (*dogovornaia respublika)* with the Georgian SSR. In February 1931, this status was downgraded to an Autonomous SSR within the Georgian SSR. The Abkhaz

[18] Jeremy Smith, "The Georgian Affair of 1922: Policy Failure, Personality Clash or Power Struggle?," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, 3 (1998): 519–44.

[19] Stephen Jones, "The Establishment of Soviet Power in Transcaucasia: The Case of Georgia, 1921–1928," *Soviet Studies* 40, 4 (1988): 616–39.

[20] Étienne Peyrat, "Soviet Federalism at Work: Lessons from the History of the Transcaucasian Federation, 1922–1936," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 65, 4 (2018): 529–59.

[21] Kaiser, *Georgian and Soviet*, 22.

[22] Fighting erupted between Ossetians and the DRG over territory during the Russian Civil War that began as a "social confrontation around land distribution" but, "given the way class coincided with ethnicity," took on an ethnonational character. Arsène Saparov, "From Conflict to Autonomy: The Making of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region, 1918–1922," *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, 1 (2010): 99–123.

became the titular nationality of a territory situated in an asymmetrical federal matrix of institutions and nodes of power.[23] One central Bolshevik goal was to avoid national fragmentation of union republics.[24]

The 1936 Soviet constitution dissolved the TSFSR into the Armenian SSR, Georgian SSR, and Azerbaijan SSR. Union Republics and their titular nationalities assumed a new leading role in Soviet development and national consolidation. This was reflected in the shortened list of official nationalities in the 1939 All-Union Population Census. Krista Goff's *Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus* explores how the political empowerment of titular nationalities to nation-build in the South Caucasus affected nontitular national groups.[25] Assimilation of smaller nonterritorialized groups by titular nations over the lifespan of the USSR, however fractured and incomplete, proved relatively successful in preventing the potentially destabilizing (from the union republic perspective) national consolidation of smaller groups.

Claire P. Kaiser, author of *Georgian and Soviet*, recasts the term "titular nationality" as "entitled nationality." This reframing has conceptual implications: nationality moves from an ascriptive, taxonomic identifier into a political status with agency. As an entitled nationality, Georgians commanded the necessary elements of nationhood in the Georgian SSR—including a geographic imaginary, republican governance structure, and institutions to develop the Georgian language, culture, and economy. Kaiser's concept of entitled nationhood does not align with the framework of liberal individual citizen rights but rather collective national rights, agency, and entitlements. From this view, Sovietization in the South Caucasus does not present itself as the continuation of imperial-era Russification but rather its reversal: nationalizing, developmentalist nation-states mobilized Armenianization, Azerbaijanization, and Georgianization processes within a negotiated national-federalism over the lifespan of the Soviet Union.

At times, ethnonational primordialism sutured historical narratives to said entitlements, obfuscating clear distinctions between ethnicity and

[23] Abkhaz Bolshevik Nestor Lakoba crucially relied on patron client networks to consolidate Soviet power in Abkhazia. Timothy Blauvelt, *Clientelism and Nationality in an Early Soviet Fiefdom: The Trials of Nestor Lakoba* (London: Routledge 2021).

[24] Arsene Saparov, *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus: The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh* (London: Routledge 2015); Jeremy Smith, "The Origins of Soviet National Autonomy," *Revolutionary Russia* 10, 2 (1997): 62–84.

[25] Krista Goff, *Nested Nationalism: Making and Unmaking Nations in the Soviet Caucasus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

nationality.[26] This can be understood only in the context of the political imperatives of Soviet nation building: the commitment to deconstruct, in Lenin's words, the Russian Empire's "prison house of nations." Armed with the view that nations were progressive modern phenomena with deep origins, Soviet power positioned itself as a form of revolutionary modernity capable of reversing imperial-era national erasure. Primordialism was not only a means of mobilizing nation building but ensured that the material consolidation of modern nationhood, socialist economic structures, and industrialization had a territorial, political, and structural logic in which to develop.[27]

Historiography and popular discourse today widely frame the Soviet Union as an empire, albeit with unique characteristics. The USSR's political dismemberment along national lines initially exacerbated this trend in the 1990s. The lack of a single Soviet "tidy programmatic text" on nationality led, and still leads, some historians to embrace opaque conclusions about Soviet nationhood or deploy hybrid concepts (affirmative action empire, empire of nations, empire of friends).[28] Erik Scott's *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and the Evolution of Soviet Empire* frames the USSR as an "empire of diasporas" in which a unique "domestic internationalism" politically connected nationalities.[29] Some use Fredrick Cooper and Jane Burbank's work to justify the term "empire," defined as the management

[26] Victor A. Shnirelman, *The Value of the Past: Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001); Bruno Coppieters, "In Defence of the Homeland: Intellectuals and the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict," in *Secession, History and the Social Sciences*, ed. Coppieters and Michel Huysseune (Brussels: VUB Brussels University Press, 2002); Ernest Gellner, *State and Society in Soviet Thought* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Mark Bassin *The Gumilev Mystique: Biopolitics, Eurasianism, and the Construction of Community in Modern Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53, 2 (1994): 414–52.

[27] Harun Yilmaz, *National Identities in Soviet Historiography: The Rise of Nations under Stalin* (London: Routledge, 2015), 3. On the concept of "modernity," see Michael David-Fox, *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015).

[28] Brigid O'Keeffe, *The Multiethnic Soviet Union and Its Demise* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022). Many scholars deploy hybridized forms of the term "empire" to define the USSR. See Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); and Rachel Applebaum, *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

[29] Erik Scott, *Familiar Strangers: The Georgian Diaspora and Evolution of the Soviet Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

and reproduction of difference, for the USSR.[30] But clarity is needed on how, by whom, and why national difference was reproduced. Even as a hybrid concept, empire often does not properly explain how agency, rights, and socioeconomic development mobilized Soviet entitled nationalities and shaped nationhood. Similarly, current academic and public discussions on Eurasia are undergoing a decolonial turn, primarily within Western academia and think tanks and among some scholars in Eurasia.[31] This decolonial framework largely assumes the USSR was a colonial-imperial continuation of the Russian Empire, emphasizing collective national victimhood. The limits of this approach become clear with the entitled nationhood framing as it makes legible how national agency and consolidation functioned within and emerged through the Soviet nation building process in the South Caucasus, specifically Georgia.

In *Identities and Representations in Georgia from the 19th Century to the Present* 12 chapters address what the editor, Hubertus Jahn, describes as the "long historic memory" of Georgians that is tied to an elusive and fluctuating national identity that accumulates "over time, place and context" (7). The collection does not present a unified view of Georgian nationhood, historical memory, or exactly what defines national identity. However, the authors largely share the assumption that Soviet and Georgian are national-political and identity categories that either have an ambiguous relation to each other or are in fundamental tension. This creates several analytical problems and questionable conclusions.

In the chapter "National Identity and Perceptions of Citizenship in Georgia over the Last Decade," the authors make the conjectural claim that a Soviet identity enjoyed "questionable success at best" in Soviet Georgia (54). For the authors Natia Mestvirishvili, Maia Mestvirishvili, and Tamar Khoshtaria "Soviet" is assumed to be an identity category counterposed to Georgian, as opposed to a form of modernity in which a Soviet Georgian identity existed and developed. Analyzing citizenship and national identity in post-Soviet Georgia faces obstacles with such presuppositions.

Nutsa Batiashvili takes a similar view in her chapter "The Liminal: Colonial Identity on the Margins of an Empire." Georgianness is first

[30] Frederick Cooper and Jane Burbank, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[31] Volodymyr Ishchenko, "Ukrainian Voices?," *New Left Review* (November–December 2022): 138.

defined by how the national intelligentsia of the 19th and early 20th centuries "shaped the political discourse about peoplehood and nationhood" (46). Within this discourse, a culturally distinct "discursive tradition" is defined as the tension between "self-idealizing and self-condemning voices." Batiashvili's central claim, and one also made in her 2017 monograph *Bivocal Nation*, is that liminality and in betweenness—the nation as a site of becoming—define the "colonial" condition of Georgianness historically relegated to the "edge of empires."[32] This dialogic fragmentation—termed bivocality—is the mnemonic centerpiece of the modern Georgian "imagined community." However, Batiashvili only partially locates the "distinct realities, socio-political contexts and historical conditions" (51) of Georgian national identity due to a dismissive account of the Soviet period.

Batiashvili claims that Soviet and Georgian as identities are not shared, but instead the dialogic fracturing of Georgianness in Soviet Georgia was deepened because the Soviet experience "was just as complex and ambiguous as the regime itself" (49–50). Further, Soviet-era nation building and the policy of *korenizatsiia* allegedly resulted in "more profound fragmentation of the national borders and cultural boundaries than in a unification of territory" (49). Indeed, Soviet nations were sites of becoming—always developing toward a communist future—however, Soviet nationhood overcame imperial-era national ambiguity, fragmentation, and most important identity erasure of entitled nationalities (and many other smaller ones), by formally defining nations and foregrounding their development, especially at the union republic level. Batiashvili cites Erik Scott's *Familiar Strangers* to further claim a tension between "Georgian" and "Soviet" by arguing the USSR's supranational ideology of "friendship of the peoples" (*druzhba narodov*) reproduced essentialist stereotypes and "performative privileges" (50). However, this claim ignores the key finding of that book—that the performative nationhood of Soviet Georgians was connected to the status the territorialization of the Georgian SSR afforded those Georgians both inside and outside the republic, whether selling goods in markets or working in the halls of the Kremlin. Jeff Sahadeo's study of Soviet migrants similarly places Georgians as economically and culturally linked by the Georgian SSR's unique place of relative privilege within a Soviet multinational civilization.[33]

[32] Batiashvili engages directly with Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012). Nutsa Batiashvili, *The Bivocal Nation: Memory and Identity on the Edge of Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[33] Jeff Sahadeo, *Voices from the Soviet Edge: Southern Migrants in Leningrad and Moscow* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

Jeremy Smith's chapter in *Identities and Representations* frames Soviet power as a force that accommodated Georgian nationalism. His view is similar to Batiashvili's in that Soviet and Georgian are considered separate political and identity categories in tension. Indeed, forms of political and national accommodation were crucial to ensuring early Bolshevik control and shaping Soviet nationality policy. Further, given that the lines between national identity, political interests, and patron-client networks were especially blurred throughout the Caucasus in the aftermath of 1917, the title question of Smith's 2019 article, "Was There a Soviet Nationality Policy?" is not without merit.[34]

However, by omitting a more careful engagement with Marxism, Smith ignores the political compatibility of nationalism with 20th-century socialist movements and governments, as well as the concrete ways Marxism long engaged with the national question.[35] By 1912, Noe Jordania was already observing that Georgian workers were "fusing socialism and national culture into a single liberation movement."[36] The Bolsheviks understood that nationalism existed but not in a way divorced from politics or material conditions. Smith frames socialism and nationalism as opposing, almost ephemeral phenomena that exist beyond the realm of historical conditions by claiming that "Georgian socialism was always linked to nationalism and in part based on national traditions of solidarity," yet still "socialism and nationalism rarely sit well together and in Georgia's case it has tended to be nationalism that has emerged triumphant" (80). Sovietization of Georgia did not accommodate nationalism but reconfigured and mobilized it. This difference is key. The development of a socialist multinational modernity became indistinguishable from local national consolidation. In the Georgian SSR nationalism routinely expressed itself not in opposition to but through Soviet institutions or even as a defense of Soviet socialism.

To the historian Claire Kaiser, "Soviet" and "Georgian" are more than just compatible—their interdependent development into a specific form of nationhood is examined in her *Georgian and Soviet*. Using Rogers Brubaker's term "nationalizing state," Kaiser explains how the Soviet institutionalization of nationality equipped "national republics and their

[34] Jeremy Smith, "Was There a Soviet Nationality Policy?," *Europe-Asia Studies* 71, 6 (2019): 972–93; C. H. Fairbanks, Jr., "National Cadres as a Force in the Soviet System: The Evidence of Beria's Career, 1949–53," in *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices*, ed. J. R. Azrael (New York: Praeger, 1978); Timothy Blauvelt, *Clientelism and Nationality in an Early Soviet Fiefdom* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

[35] Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[36] Suny, *Stalin*, 520.

entitled citizenries with the tools of nationalizing states" (24), exploring how the mutually reinforcing relationship between ideas and activity through Soviet institutions both endowed and limited what nation builders could achieve "within the borders of the USSR" (63). As an "entitled nationality," Georgians were empowered to "undertake a considerable amount of nationalizing work to actually make the polity they were given by the Soviet project sufficiently Georgian" (24).

One instrument for doing so was the Soviet census. In 1926, census takers in the Georgian SSR consolidated the Georgian nationality by defining certain groups as constitutive subnationalities of Georgian. In the case of Megrelians, such a definition was adjoined by the eventual decision to not grant their native region of Samegrelo in western Georgia autonomous status after a struggle among republican party elites between 1925 and 1933.[37] This decision widened the definition of Georgian and stunted the institutional development of Megrelian nationhood yet did not erase the Megrelian identity or language—Megrelians became a constitutive group of the Georgian ethnos and quasi-civic Georgian national identity.

Another important instrument was history. Early Soviet historians like Mikhail Pokrovskii recast the history of the Russian Empire through Marxism—viewing Russia's centuries of development "as a process driven by capital accumulation and social conflicts."[38] This had direct implications for history writing in the Georgian SSR. Kaiser describes the "father of Georgian history" Ivane Javakhishvili (1876–1940), author of *Kartveli eris istoria* (History of the Georgian Nation) between 1908 and 1914, as incubating a form of academic nationalism that came into practice "via the dual Soviet institutional infrastructure of national academies of sciences and the enabling mechanisms of nation building and ethnic consolidation" (51). Simon Janashia and Nikoloz Berdzenishvili were two of Javakhishvili's students. As multidisciplinary but historically focused scholars, they helped formalize and institutionalize "interdisciplinary and Marxist-Leninist approaches toward Georgian history" within the Soviet Academy of Sciences and Tbilisi State University (53). Together they published *sakartvelos istoria* in 1943, applying a "Marxist-Leninist historical and developmental framework to the *longue durée* story of Georgian nation and state-building," emphasizing the "territorialized history of Georgia as a political-cultural

[37] Timothy Blauvelt, "The 'Mingrelian Question': Institutional Resources and the Limits of Soviet Nationality Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies* 6 (2014): 993–1013.

[38] Alexey Golubev, "No Natural Colonization: The Early Soviet School of Historical Anti-Colonialism," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 65, 2 (2023): 190–204.

entity" with "language as the decisive factor not only for defining a nation's territory but also for unifying the nation itself" (55). Stalin was directly involved—meeting the authors in Sochi in October 1945, providing detailed revisions and notes for the 1946 edition (58).

This academic lineage produced a stable and clear ethnoterritorial apparatus that entitled nation builders used throughout the Soviet period to create a conceptual map of the Georgian nation. This "largely successful and durable pursuit" informed how the formal bounds of the Georgian SSR were negotiated (59–60). This was done through World War II, partly through the geostrategic aims of the Soviet state as a whole.

In 1944, the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was formed, and as a Finnish newspaper noted, Georgia was the first Soviet republic to independently make demands in international politics (69). Despite claims that the republican foreign ministries were fictive, "a Georgian foreign policy that embraced Soviet structures yet operated somewhat independently" contrasts with this idea (85). Georgian People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs Giorgi Kiknadze argued that Turkey violated the 1921 Treaty of Kars "by advocating for a greater Turkey comprising Crimea and the Caucasus" and that this justified the Georgian SSR's territorial claims. He even went so far as to note in a September 1945 report to Lavrentii Beria and Viacheslav Molotov of the lands in question being "Georgian lands since ancient times" and included "the administrative capital Artanuji, of the medieval Georgian state of Tao-Klarjeti" (65). On 14 December 1945, Janashia and Berdzenishvili published a now infamous article titled "Turketisadmi chveni kanonieri preteziebis shesakheb" (On Our Legal Claims toward Turkey) (66). The article did not rely on violations of the 1921 Treaties of Kars and Moscow as justification but was grounded in "language, material culture, historical geography, and archaeology" (67). As Kaiser points out, the fact that this article was republished and radio-broadcast across the entire USSR, coinciding with a meeting between Stalin and Western foreign ministers in Moscow where territorial demands were discussed, suggests a "high level of coordination" with party organs (66).

The 1936 Soviet constitution emphasized the primacy of union republics. Georgian culture and language flourished and dominated, while the Abkhaz and Ossetian languages shifted to the Georgian script (71), in the only such case where a non-Cyrillic script of the titular nationality was imposed on nontitular languages from different language families. Meanwhile, under Beria's guise, thousands of ethnic Georgians (largely Megrelians) were resettled in Abkhazia, shifting the demographic balance

there and laying the groundwork for more frequent and public Abkhaz national complaints against Tbilisi. Similarly, post–World War II deportations and population resettlements disproportionately affected non-Georgians. Some of these policies and their outcomes were ultimately reversed with Nikita Khrushchev's appointment of Vasil Mzhvanadze as first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party in 1953.

In March 1956 in Tbilisi, the first large-scale protests in the postwar USSR erupted in response to Khrushchev's speech "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" at the 20th Party Congress. While criticizing Stalin three years after his death, Khrushchev made specific and demeaning reference to his popularity in Georgia. Future nationalist leaders Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava participated in the protests. Slogans denounced Khrushchev and generally demanded a return "to the kind of communism which for them was represented by Lenin, Stalin, Beria and Molotov."[39] This expressed a collective grievance at the perceived loss of status within the Soviet ethnofederal arrangement coming with de-Stalinization.[40] Available sources provide little to suggest there was open hostility toward non-Georgian ethnic groups, including Russians, or mass opposition to Soviet rule. According to Kaiser, the March events ushered in an "expansion of political space that generated new types of political action in Georgia … while remaining under the Soviet umbrella" (133). Local party leaders ultimately presented de-Stalinization in Georgia as an opposition to Beria's role in the Georgian SSR more than to Stalin himself.

Georgian and Soviet also paints a picture of what a "lived nationality" in matured, postwar socialism looks like. Kaiser builds on the robust and growing literature on Soviet nationalities and applies it to the Georgian case in the late USSR. This insightful contribution explores how nationality was materially rooted in ways beyond cultural expression or earlier *korenizatsiia* policies. Decades of urbanization and economic growth transformed Tbilisi into a truly "national capital," like others across the USSR. New neighborhoods in postwar Tbilisi created the lived basis of "Soviet Georgianness." More Georgians moved to the historically cosmopolitan and rapidly expanding capital, thus increasing the Georgian population of the city. These processes also produced an urban middle class and intelligentsia that were unmistakably Soviet. Improved living standards, industry, and decades of economic growth underwrote this new national coherence and stability.

[39] Jeremy Smith, "Georgian Nationalism and Soviet Power: Between Accommodation and Revolt," in *Identities and Representations*, 80.

[40] Timothy Blauvelt, "Status Shift and Ethnic Mobilisation in the March 1956 Events in Georgia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, 4 (2009): 651–68.

Kaiser explores how Soviet citizens took active ownership of the world they inhabited by making demands of local or even all-Soviet officials through written letters regarding housing, public space, or other matters. This urbanized Soviet life did not contradict Georgian national identity—together, they expressed a living Soviet Georgian nationhood.

In 1970, the Soviet ethnographer Iulian Bromlei argued that developed socialism stimulated the growth of "ethnic self-awareness" because of "the enormous influence exerted by the scientific and technological revolution." In this sense, the "homogenous social structure of a new historic community—the Soviet people" was not a supranational identity undermining national difference but rather the shared socioeconomic modernization that the observed "ethnic self-awareness" was incubated within.[41] By 1988, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was addressing how the "national self-consciousness" Soviet nationhood had engendered was a source of potential problems.[42]

Gorbachev's "return to Lenin" through perestroika and glasnost empowered and mobilized national(ist) intelligentsias in the South Caucasus. His policies catalyzed the devolution of Soviet federal institutions, emboldening mutually exclusive ethno-territorial visions.[43] Grievances previously articulated and negotiated through the Soviet system became mobilizations that, intentionally or not, contested Soviet federalism and shaped post-Soviet national identities.[44]

The character of national mobilizations was informed by territorialization, federal status, and degree of national development. On 18 March 1989, members of the Abkhaz intelligentsia and party nomenklatura signed the Likhny Declaration, calling to redesignate the Abkhaz ASSR as a union republic and secede from the Georgian SSR. Malkhaz Toria argues in *Identities and Representations* that this was the "decisive event" in the

[41] Quotes by the Soviet ethnographer Iulian Bromlei, cited in Gellner, *State and Society in Soviet Thought.*

[42] Mikhail Gorbachev, Report of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party at the Nineteenth All-Union Conference of the Communist Party, 29 June 1988; Martha B. Olcott, with Lubomyr Hajda and Anthony Olcott, eds., *Soviet Multinational State: Readings and Documents* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), 24–26. Original source: *Pravda*, 29 June 1988, 5.

[43] Vladislav Zubok, *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

[44] Anastasia Shesterinina, *Mobilizing in Uncertainty: Collective Identities and War in Abkhazia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

conflictual trajectory of Georgian-Abkhaz relations. Toria's chapter explores the role of Abkhaz national institutions and intelligentsia in the mobilization, as well as Abkhaz and Georgian national historiographies. However, it does not address a far more consequential factor: Soviet Georgian "entitled nationhood" and its role in shaping Georgian countermobilizations.

Calls for the Abkhaz ASSR to secede were perceived existentially as a threat to the Georgian SSR—*sakartvelo*—itself. In this sense, the harsh Georgian reaction to the Likhny Declaration in Sokhumi and Tbilisi in 1989 paralleled the 1956 Tbilisi protests against de-Stalinization. Both mobilizations were reacting to a perceived questioning of the status of the Georgian SSR and the collective national rights this status guaranteed. Despite an emergent national movement, in 1989 Georgian national demands did not initially call for independence but, just as in 1956, functionally opposed relitigating Soviet federalism. Tbilisi was a subfederal center in its own right and shifting the Abkhaz ASSR's status would call that into question. It was only after the Soviet soldiers killed protestors in Tbilisi on 9 April 1989, another "decisive event," that Georgian independence became politically conceivable.[45] In this context, once marginal ideas politically resonated. The intelligentsia-led national movement was thus able to effectively instrumentalize exaggerated mythologies about Georgia's historic struggle against Russo-Soviet occupation.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia became post-Soviet Georgia's first president in 1991 by politically capitalizing on the deaths of protestors and national mobilization of 9 April 1989. He promoted an ultraconservative ethnonational vision of Georgia's "spiritual mission," associating non-Georgian minorities with Soviet "imperialism."[46] The second president, Eduard Shevardnadze (1995–2003), pushed Georgia's Western orientation but more as an assumed path to sovereignty and development than as an exclusivist national identity. The 2003 Rose Revolution ushered in the presidency of Mikheil Saakashvili and a more formal, state-driven attempt to lustrate the Soviet past from Georgian nationhood, through a comprehensive reconceptualization of the nation.[47] Georgia experienced in these years, what Gal Kirn

[45] Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[46] Stephen H. Rapp, "Dismantling 'Georgia's Spiritual Mission': Sacral Ethnocentrism, Cosmopolitan Nationalism, and Primordial Awakenings at the Soviet Collapse," in *Empire and Belonging at the Eurasian Borderlands*, ed. Krista A. Goff and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

[47] Fabio De Leonardis, "Memory and Nation-Building in Georgia," in *Nation-Building and Identity in the Post Soviet Space: New Tools and Approaches*, ed. Rico Isaacs and Abel Polese (New York: Routledge, 2016), 24–45.

observes in the post-Yugoslav context, the primitive accumulation of capital and memory.[48] The extreme neoliberal policies adjoined with a political vision committed to Western integration were mobilized through public memory politics, framing the Soviet period (and by extension Marxism) as the source of Georgia's post-Soviet crises. Orthodox liberal economics were naturalized as inherent to the Georgian identity. Georgian émigré national narratives were rehabilitated and institutionalized, clearly represented in the Museum of the Soviet Occupation opened in central Tbilisi in 2006. In 2010, a "truth commission" on the Soviet past was undertaken.[49] Memory laws banning communist symbols were instated. Because the Russian Federation was recognized globally as the sole successor to the USSR, publicly inheriting a shared Soviet history carried specific geopolitical connotations. This "nationalization" of the Soviet past reached its apogee in Georgia with the 2008 Russo-Georgian War.[50] Georgia's geopolitical predicament and relations with the Russian Federation became radically and formally articulated through the prism of anti-Soviet memory politics.

During the Saakashvili administration (2003–12), the figure and image of Stalin became a plane of struggle for how to conceptualize and signify Soviet Georgia. Soviet monuments and Stalin statues were torn down, as the Georgian government embraced a view of the Soviet past that parroted memory regimes of postcommunist countries entering the European Union in the mid-2000s.[51] Instead of reflecting on the Georgian SSR's unique experience, historical memory became a means to negotiate Georgia's Europeanness with Western institutions and historically justify neoliberal reforms. Despite the anti-Saakashvili Georgian Dream coalition coming to power in 2012–13 and slightly reducing focus on anti-Soviet narratives, tensions over memory politics in Georgia continue today.

[48] Gal Kirn discusses "primitive accumulation of capital and memory" which accurately describes the relationship between postsocialist memory and marketization in Georgia. Gal Kirn, "'The Primitive Accumulation of Capital and Memory': Mnemonic Wars as National Reconciliation Discourse in (Post-)Yugoslavia," *Memory Studies* 15, 6 (2022), https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980221133724.

[49] Administered by Vasili Rukhadze. Thank you to Rukhadze for sending along part of the commission report.

[50] Malkhaz Toria, "The Soviet Occupation of Georgia in 1921 and the Russian–Georgian War of August 2008: Historical Analogy as a Memory Project," in *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918–2012: The First Georgian Republic and Its Successors*, ed. Stephen F. Jones (New York: Routledge, 2014), 316–36.

[51] The French political scientist Laure Neumayer explains the role of "memory entrepreneurs" in promoting anticommunism in European political bodies as a strategy to reconceptualize the meaning of Europe. Laure Neumayer, *Criminalization of Communism in the European Political Space after the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

In *Identities and Representations*, Gotfredsen acknowledges that Stalin "embodies a multiplicity of significations" (27) in contemporary Georgia, and conscious attempts at resignification, such as removing Soviet statues or renarrativizing the Stalin Museum in Gori have been a "partial success"(17). Nikoloz Aleksidze explains how cults of saints have emerged in Georgia to play a "vital role in contemporary national, ethnic and religious anxieties" (135). For some of the poorer and more religious, Stalin also assumes the role of sanctified avatar of contemporary anxieties. The historian Lasha Bakradze's chapter on the Stalin Museum claims adoration for Stalin in Georgia today is a "traumatic inferiority complex of the colonized," amounting to "provincialism" (11–12). Yet if adoration for Stalin during the Soviet period was intertwined with decades of economic growth and national consolidation, a far cry from colonization, then why is Stalin still revered in post-Soviet Georgia? If Stalin's popularity is more openly celebrated by the poor, those excluded from political visions of a "European" Georgia who have not seen material improvements since the collapse of the Soviet Union, then what does such a strongly class-correlated memory explain about the Soviet past and post-Soviet transition? What material and social anxieties about the loss of Soviet Georgia does Stalin's image channel?

Tinatin Japaridze's *Stalin's Millennials: Nostalgia, Trauma, and Nationalism* combines "sociopolitical commentary and autobiographical elements" to examine Georgia's unreconciled Soviet past by delving into the "complex legacies" of Stalin (11). The highly personal book sets out to speak to and from the point of view of the generation born in the late USSR and raised in the post-Soviet period—"Stalin's millennials."

Though fondness for the Soviet period exists in Georgia, it is politically cast as "pro-Russian and therefore anti-Georgian" (25). Japaridze's autobiographical memory project explores this paradox. The image-concept of a "historical Stalin," a figure based on the journalist Simon Sebag Montefiore's questionable 2007 book *Young Stalin*, is the metaphor used to represent this contentious status of the Soviet past. But as Ron Suny's biography on Stalin's revolutionary years in Georgia explains, Montefiore's book overwhelmingly focuses on Stalin's "personal rather than political side" within an "exoticized" image of Georgia and the Caucasus.[52] Japaridze's "historical

[52] Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (New York: Knopf, 2007); Suny, *Stalin*, 701.

Stalin" broadly transmits such historiographic shortcomings throughout her work.

In *Stalin's Millennials*, history is used to explore ephemeral concepts rather than as a methodical arbitration of the past. Admittedly, Japaridze did not set out to write history or a biography of Stalin but rather "a social and cultural narrative exploring the remnants of his legacies that continue to permeate the psyche and politics of the Eurasian region as a whole" (26). Yet the central idea is a proposal, accented with countless distracting literary and historical cliches, to reconcile Soviet Georgia through a view of history embodied in the image of a "Third Stalin" defined as a "hybrid" of a "Georgian Koba" and "Russified Red Tsar" that belongs to both the "present and the future" (79). This "Third Stalin" is central to Japaridze's analysis of memory in Georgia because Stalin himself "remains entrenched in the here and now" as a "timeless monument that cannot be toppled no matter how many monuments and vestiges we eradicate and replace" (135). Suggesting reconciliation with the Soviet past through Stalin's vague resignification alone, eschewing the role of decades of economic and national development in the Georgian SSR, is the book's major weakness.

Japaridze's conclusions, like those of Batiashvili, see Georgian identity today as fractured. *Stalin's Millennials* does not claim that this stems from a longue durée of Georgian history but rather, though not firmly articulated, from something far more recent—the loss of Soviet Georgianness. Although the book does not deeply engage with what this means, some conclusions can be built on this inference. Dismemberment of the longest era of coherent nation building in Georgia's modern history leaves Stalin's millennials grasping for reconciliation with a lived nationality that cannot return and, because it is viewed with suspicion, struggles to be politically articulated. The loss of Soviet Georgia deconstructed the institutional and political logic in which modern Georgia developed. In this sense, an irreconcilable tension exists not between Soviet and Georgian but between the "lived nationality" of Soviet Georgia and the state-led anti-Soviet memory regime established and encouraged in Georgia since 1991.

Throughout *Identities and Representations* there is an assumed tension, distance, and even opposition between Soviet and Georgian as historical, political, and identity categories. This analytical assumption is the result of not academic imprecision or authorial oversight but rather an uncritical embrace of the institutionalized national identity and historical memory

regime established in post-Soviet Georgia. The historiographic intervention and theoretical contribution that *Georgian and Soviet* presents with entitled nationhood offers an alternative framework—it clarifies not only how Georgian national agency functioned in the USSR but the ways in which a specific form of Soviet Georgian nationhood emerged on the institutional and popular levels. *Stalin's Millennials* asks important questions regarding how an unreconciled Soviet past and Stalin's complex legacies in Georgia are negotiated through memory and reviews crucial pieces of scholarship. However the book's investigation of memory through Stalin as an image-concept overlooks more consequential structural and historical dynamics.

What all three books allude to, but do not adequately engage with, is how the loss of the Georgian SSR, entitled nationhood, and Soviet modernity politically and materially feature in post-Soviet Georgia. Exploring this question would be a useful approach to future research. The dramatic levels of deindustrialization, state collapse, severe economic decline, emigration, ethnonational conflict, territorial dismemberment, civil war, and a myriad of social crises since the end of the Soviet Union have adversely affected Georgia's development. Post-Soviet nation builders attempted to remedy this by adjoining to a neoliberal modernization project led by Europe and the United States at the peak of post–Cold War globalization. Economic and development considerations were sutured to a messianic politics of national salvation and historical reconciliation through an ideal of Western integration and asserting Europeanness. Despite clear institutional and socioeconomic improvements since the 1990s, the country has struggled to return to the GDP levels of the late Soviet period and Georgia's admission into Western institutions like the European Union is by no means guaranteed. Georgia's fragmented bivocal national identity that Batiashvili and other authors describe has sharpened not because vestiges of the Soviet past weigh heavy on the present, but rather because attempted Western integration, imported democracy building, and extreme marketization cannot overcome the root causes of Georgia's post-Soviet peripheralization. The fact that this peripheralization was caused not by the establishment of the Georgian SSR, a centerpiece of the USSR, but due to its loss has never been nationally reconciled in any meaningful way.

The historian Enzo Traverso observes that since the collapse of state socialism in Europe, "historians write the history of memory, while civil societies carry on the living memory of a historical past."[53] Importantly,

[53] Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York: Verso, 2016).

living memory and its democratic expression as collective memory are distinct from what Traverso calls the "unifying narrative" that functions as a civil religion. In Europe it has been "the sacralization of the foundational values of liberal democracies—pluralism, tolerance, and Rights of Man—whose defense takes the form of a secular liturgy of remembering." The creation of a civil religion in post-Soviet Georgia based on lustrating the Soviet past from the nation and naturalizing marketization politically disrupted the transmission of Soviet Georgian nationhood into a living memory of a historical past, instead structuring it formally as antithetical to the nation. This anti-Soviet memory regime does not safeguard a prosperous future but actively impedes the historical reconciliation needed to animate a radically better one. But overcoming the political strictures of historical amnesia cannot be done in the archives alone. It requires the active reclamation of history—transforming the living memory of Soviet modernity, socialist internationalism, the Georgian SSR, and the historical agency of Soviet Georgians into a *collective memory*.

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