

PANEL 4:
NATION BUILDING, NATIONAL IDENTITY, NATIONALISM

4.1 MKHITAR GABRIELIAN (Yerevan State University)
 & **RUZANNA TSATURYAN** (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography)

PERCEIVING NATIONALISM AS NEGATIVE: LACK OF COMPROMISE

The implementation of the research project 'Daily nationalism and ethnicity in Armenia' in 2012–15 revealed the scope of the problems/misinterpretations of perceptions of nationalism in social/anthropological studies in Armenia. One of the essential results of the project was the extensive ethnographic data recorded from 3 villages in Armenia on the issue which has been archived and partly implemented in the final publication of the project Armenianness every day: from above to below.

The research shows that despite the possibilities of conducting field work on nationalism and ethnicity perceptions in daily life, the former Soviet-style essentialist approach when nationalism was perceived as dangerous still prevails in academic discussions. Meanwhile the concepts of 'other nationalisms' such as civic, ethnic, positive and negative are widely discussed in contemporary theoretical and methodological publications in social science in Western academic circles. The tensions on the Armenian-Azerbaijani borderline along with the April war in 2016 that led to casualties and destruction show that there are limited possibilities for broadly delivering approaches on 'alternative nationalisms'. This presentation seeks to discuss the notions outlined above to show that coping with the essentialist perceptions of nationalism is closely linked to political development and seen as a powerful tool for elites, in some cases for achieving their personal goals.

MKHITAR GABRIELIAN is a social anthropologist with a candidate degree in history. He is a senior researcher at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Armenia, a lecturer and head of the Master's program "Ethnography" at Yerevan State University. His main research interests center on the anthropology of war and conflict, rural studies, nationalism and ethnicity. He is actively engaged in various local and international research programs. His most recent research project was 'Daily Nationalism and ethnicity in Armenia', supported by the Academic Swiss Caucasus Net, and 'Research Beyond the Ivory Tower', supported by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). He is an author / co-author of 9 monographs and more than 50 scientific articles.

RUZANNA TSATURYAN is a research fellow at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Armenia. Her main research interests are the scope of nationalism and ethnicity, cultural heritage, gender studies and food anthropology. One of the recent projects she has been engaged in is 'Daily Nationalism and Ethnicity in Armenia', supported by the Academic Swiss Caucasus Net. As a senior researcher she contributed the edited volume with the chapter on the ties between taste, nationalism and ethnicity. The issue of why seemingly mundane things such as food acquire such huge symbolic burdens, flatter ethnicity and nationalism, become bio-political tools of inclusion and exclusion, symbols of policy and power are discussed in her recent publications and articles. She has also held several international research fellowships on food anthropology, traditional cultural practices, gender issues and education.

4.2 SATENIK MKRTCHYAN (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography)

IN SEARCH OF A FOUNDATION MYTH: STATE-BUILDING AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE EVENTS OF 1988–91 IN THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

The memory of events of the late 1980s and early 1990s is important in several ways for Armenia. First, this was the period of the emergence of an independent nation-state on the ruins of the USSR. Then, it was a period in which a totalitarian system of

state socialism was replaced by an (at least in theory) democratic political system and a free market. In the case of Armenia, it was also the period when the largest popular movement in the country's history took place. Finally, it was during these years that the ethnic conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh began to unfold.

Thus, this period is of crucial importance for the newly emerged Armenian state. It has been a subject of debates and conflicting interpretations which have stressed certain aspects of the transition and have downplayed others. In our analysis of the political discourse in post-Soviet Armenia we have identified three main models of representation of the events of 1988–91: (1) the narrative of democratic struggle against a totalitarian regime; (2) the narrative of the struggle of national liberation for independent statehood; (3) the narrative of ethnic conflict with Azerbaijan. During the 1990s, Armenia's post-Soviet elites claimed the country was going through a transition to democracy, the first two narratives being most commonly promoted by the authorities. At the same time, parts of the opposition which often criticized the government from the position of ethnic nationalism emphasized the "ethno-nationalist" narrative. Since the late 1990s, when authoritarian tendencies became more obvious, the government began to gravitate toward the "ethno-nationalist" paradigm. However, the "democratic and "independentist" narratives have not disappeared; elements of these narratives continue to be used in a "ritualistic" fashion by the government, and in more assertive ways by the opposition and non-formal social movements.

SATENIK MKRTCHYAN is a research fellow at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography NAS, RA and the Center for Civilizational and Cultural Studies at Yerevan State University. She has more than ten years of experience in program evaluation, social, policy and ethnographic research. She has published articles, chapters of volumes and online publications on ethno-national identity, textbook research, school anthropology, diaspora studies, etc. Over the years of her research experience, Dr. Mkrtychyan has been involved in more than 20 research projects across the Caucasus in cooperation with international organizations and universities, including the ASCN, the Université Fribourg, the Universität St. Gallen, the World Bank, and the Caucasus Research Resource Center. Dr. Mkrtychyan is a recipient of prestigious research fellowships, such as the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Regional scholarship programme for social scientists, and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). Most recently, she successfully designed and implemented two cross-border projects for social science students under the Heinrich Böll Foundation's grant scheme. Dr. Mkrtychyan holds a Doctorate Degree in Anthropology from Tbilisi State University, a Master's degree in Ethnology from Yerevan State University and a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from the same university. She has also spent substantial time conducting research at the Philipp University of Marburg, Marburg/Lahn (Germany), UC Berkeley in the U.S., and the Center for Independent Sociological Research in St. Petersburg, Russia.

4.3 NINO GUGUSHVILI (Center for Social Sciences – CSS)
 & **IRINA OSEPAHVILI** (Center for Social Sciences – CSS)

«WE» AND «OTHER» DICHOTOMY IN THE CONTEXT OF GEORGIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Since the 1990s, Georgia has been undergoing political, social, economic and cultural transformations, partly resulting from its European integration process. Increasing trends of detraditionalization and individualization accompanying the globalization and Europeanization processes in turn affect the construction of national identity.

If at first glance the importance of national borders declines in the context of growing globalization, in fact the nation-state still remains a key marker for social identification. In order for national identity to be shaped, it is crucial to identify oneself with the nation, a "we-group" (in-group) separate from others (the "they-group", the out-group). However, as alongside the increasing trends of detraditionalization