

## Battle of Narratives: Georgia between Dialogue and Confrontation

**Authors :** Ketevan Epadze

**Abstract :** The paper aims to examine conflicting historical narratives proposed by the Georgian and Abkhazian scholars on the territorial affiliation of Abkhazia in the 1950s, explain how these narratives were connected to the Soviet nationalities policy after WW II and demonstrate the dynamic of the narratives' battle in the last years of the Soviet system, which was followed by military conflict in the post-Soviet era. Abkhazia -a breakaway region of Georgia- self-declared its independence in 1992. Historical dispute on the territorial rights of Abkhazia emerged long before the military conflict began and was connected to the theory of Abkhazian ethnogenesis written by the Georgian literary scholar Pavle Ingorokva. He argued that medieval Abkhazians were Georgians, while modern Abkhazians are newcomers in Abkhazia. After the de-Stalinization, Abkhazian historians developed historical narrative opposed to Ingorokva's theory. In the 1980s, Georgian dissidents who strove for Georgia's independence used Ingorokva's thesis to oppose Abkhazians desire for self-determination and sovereignty. Abkhazian political actors in their turn employed opposite historical arguments to legitimate their rights over autonomy. Ingorokva's theory is one of the principal issues, discussed during the Georgian-Abkhazian dialogue; it often confuses Georgians and gives the reasons to Abkhazians for complaining about the Georgian discrimination in the Soviet past. The study is based on the different kind of sources: archival materials of the 1950s (Communist Party Archive of Georgia, Soviet Journal 'Mnatobi'), the book by Pavle Ingorokva 'Giorgi Merchule' (1947-1954) and Zurab Anchabadze's responsive work to Ingorokva's book - 'From the medieval history of Abkhazia' (1956-1959), political speeches of the Georgian and Abkhazian political actors in the 1980s, secondary sources on the Soviet nationalities policy from the 1950s to the 1990s.

**Keywords :** Soviet, history, ethnicity, nationalism, politics, post-Soviet, conflict

**Conference Title :** ICRES 2019 : International Conference on Russian and Eurasian Studies

**Conference Location :** Prague, Czechia

**Conference Dates :** September 05-06, 2019