

State Building / National Building: Towards a Consolidation of Powers (Comparative Analysis of the South Caucasus and Central Asia in 1991-2011)

Marilisa Lorusso, Istituto di Studi Politici Internazionali, Italy

Paper abstract submitted to the first annual international conference *"Twenty Years of Central Asian Independence: Shared Past, Separate Paths?"* at the AUCA, Bishkek, 14-16 October 2011.

The South Caucasus embraces three countries, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, which do not share linguistic links, religious traditions, political developments. The post-independence processes of State building and Nation building often entered into conflict in the three Republics, where assertive nationalisms had disruptive effects on some statehood pillars such as unity of citizenry, territorial integrity, foreign policy.

The three States pursued the aim to be fully integrated in the international community investing on processes of democratization. Being the bridge between the Central Asian countries and the West, their democratic accreditation, in line with the expectations of their Western neighborhood, potentially empowers them as "European" mediators in the post-Soviet space. Georgia in particular is playing the trump card of promoting its Western identity to maximize its regional position.

The full picture may be more complex. Starting from the very concept of State building, shortcomings can be identified in the establishment of recognized State borders, in the State's monopoly on the use of force, or in the reach of a national identity inclusive enough to prevent further claims or clashes with minorities, regional tensions. Georgia, after the war of August 2008, is a case study. The processes of democratization present also questionable aspects. The three countries chose three different ways to democracy: a revolution, Georgia; reforms, Armenia; a democracy double, Azerbaijan. Thus the region mirrors all the combinations present in the whole post-Soviet space. The partly or completely unlike trails led to the common output of consolidation of power elites, perhaps more than of stabilization of State institutions.

The process of Nation building may be sensed as a compensatory one, with a strategic stress put on national identity to requite citizens for State building's failures.