

## The birth of modern Circassian nationalism

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This article focuses on problems of the national movement of the Circassians – a small nation in the Caucasus, most of whose population is dispersed all over the world. The paper researches the development of the Circassian movement from 1989–2000 and its contemporary structure since 2005. The modern Circassian movement as a whole has never been approached from a political science viewpoint. This research aims to answer several core questions: What are the different strands of the movement? What principles are they based on? Who are the participants? What political forces support them? How do these political forces interact with each other?

**Keywords:** nationalism; nationalist movement; Russia; Caucasus; Circassians

### Introduction

Ethnonationalism is one of the central factors influencing the perennially tense political and social situation in the North Caucasus, an important but understudied region of the world. Study of the modern Circassian movement is important, given the seeming centrality of nationalism in the region and the gap in Western knowledge of the region generally and Circassian-related issues in particular. It is also very timely, considering the context of current problems facing the North Caucasus, the upcoming Sochi Olympics, and issues of nationalism in the Russian Federation.

The modern Circassian movement started after the end of Cold War. As Karl Renner once described such movements, it is “the birthday of the political idea of the nation,” when after the end of the Cold War, the linguistic and cultural community of the Circassian people “emerges from the world of passive existence as people. They become conscious of themselves as a force with a historical destiny” (89). The movement developed nationalist content in the sense defined by Ernest Gellner as “primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent” (1). The Circassian movement clearly has features that E.J. Hobsbawm identified as “proto-national” bonds, which are able to “mobilize certain variants of feelings of collective belonging which already existed and which could operate ... potentially on the macro-political scale which could fit in with modern states and nations” (46).

This research is based on the method of participant observation. The author participated in the Circassian movement himself in many capacities – he contributed scholarly work to the *nationalist* organization; served as editor-in-chief of an *accommodationist* and a *culturalist* newspaper; and participated in the *sovereignist* and *centrist* strands.<sup>1</sup> However, he stays strictly on the academic ground and does not regard himself as a Circassian activist, keeping in mind the well-known argument that “no serious historian

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of nations and nationalism can be a committed political nationalist” (Hobsbawm 12). The author hopes that his rich experience in the field has enhanced his empirical knowledge without affecting his academic methods for two reasons – first, he never committed himself to any particular strand and earnestly tried to participate in the movement with a vision of it as a whole, and secondly, he developed his research methods long before he entered the nationalist movement. The author hopes that he is able to regard his experiences as academic fieldwork and stay objective in his research.

The English-language work on Circassians is sparse. Nevertheless, there is an important strain of research already existing on this topic that allows us to situate our own work in the scholarly tradition. Historians Charles King and Paul Manning have analyzed the process of development of Circassian nationalism and its nature through the works of D. Urquhart, J. Bell, and A.J. Longworth, British observers in Circassia in the nineteenth century, while Michael Khodarkovsky performed research on the construction of ethnic identity through the works of S. Nogma, Khan-Girey, and A. Misostov, the local scholars of the time.

Problems of modern Circassian identity and participation of the Circassians in the political process have been researched from different aspects – Circassians and the fall of the Soviet Union (Derluguian), Circassians and gender (Shami; Dogan), Circassians and the Internet (Beslenei; Hansen; Polandov), Circassians in Turkey (Kaya), and the strategic goals of Circassian nationalism (Zhemukhov, “Circassian World”).

### **Ideology and structure of the Circassian movement**

Circassians are the major ethnic group of Russia’s northwest Caucasus and are spread across the republics of Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. Despite numbering from five to seven million people today and having played a critical role in the history of Russia’s expansion into the Caucasus in the nineteenth century, Circassians are largely unfamiliar to scholars beyond Caucasus specialists. The emergence of Circassian nationalism amid the high level of ethnonational tensions in the region over the last two decades has been an important feature of local politics in the North Caucasus, and more recently has taken on a significant international dimension.

While composing a common ethnic community, the Circassians did not represent a unified nation in the modern use of the term (or even a unified mass national movement), either at the time of Russian conquest or during the Soviet ethnoterritorial delimitation. Most of the Circassians were deported in the middle of the nineteenth century, after the Russian–Caucasian war. Circassian lands were divided, during Stalin’s experiment on nationalities, into several small administrative units of different status (autonomous republics, oblasts, and regions). These areas did not adjoin each other, and Circassian populations were grouped together with unrelated nations (see Figure 1) (Fitzgerald). The divided population was given different ethnic names in Russian – Kabardian, Adygean, Cherkes, and Shapsug – though all the groups identify themselves by the single name Adyga in their native language. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the lands traditionally inhabited by Circassians formed three republics: Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and Adygea. Smaller groups live in Krasnodar Krai, North Ossetia, and Stavropol Krai (see Figure 1). Cossacks and other mostly Slavic peoples settled on the historic Circassian lands and the Circassians of Adygea, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria have been separated by large non-Circassian, mainly Russian, communities.

The Circassian world is, in Benedict Anderson’s useful phrase, an “imagined community.” In this article, we apply the term “homeland” to the Circassians living in Russia and “diaspora” to those who live outside Russia. There are over 800,000 Circassians currently in



Figure 1. Map of The Caucasus.

Russia. Most of the Circassian population emigrated from its homeland in a mass exodus after the Russian–Caucasian war (1763–1864) and eventually scattered among 50 countries. Today approximately 5 million Circassians live in 897 villages and towns in Turkey. The most active Circassian communities are in Jordan, Syria, Israel, the United States, and the European Union. Their biggest concern is that Russian laws and the socio-economic instability in the Caucasus do not allow them to return to the homeland.

The end of the Cold War opened up a new era for the Circassian movement. The Circassian movement emerged in the context of struggle between the old Soviet regime and the new democratic movement in Russia. It had ideological precursors in the new ideas of the unity of Circassians as developed by the local intelligentsia during the Gorbachev era and was readily adopted by numerous Circassian NGOs in the diaspora, which had already been organizing since WWII. Historians have estimated that 90% (Resolution Of The Parliament Of Georgia) of the Circassian population was killed during the 101 years of Russian conquest from 1763 though 1864, allowing the parliaments of Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea, and Abkhazia (in 1992, 1996, and 1997 respectively) to recognize the Circassian Genocide during the Russian–Caucasian war.

Most importantly, Circassians united their activities on the international level. In spite of being dispersed throughout the world, they formed a common ideology based on a shared memory of what they regarded as genocide that the tsarist state committed during its conquest of the North Caucasus in the nineteenth century. The Circassians maintained three goals – recognition of the genocide, unification of Circassian territories in the homeland, and repatriation of the expelled population. Among numerous goals that many organizations have developed through their activities, in 2008, three strategic goals were

defined for the first time (Zhemukhov, “Circassian World”); later they were widely recognized by Circassian organizations in the homeland and the diaspora (Hansen).

Participating in the contemporary Circassian movement are several groups with motivations that shift, expand, and sometimes (but not always) coincide. These groups consist of local elites and the intelligentsia, members of the international diaspora, politicians, businessmen, and activists. While there are hundreds of Circassian organizations and political actors all over the world that share the three strategic goals, they can be divided into several categories by having separate centers, administrative resources, tactical goals, and methods.

The modern Circassian movement can be divided into two periods with a similar range of strands but different characters of development. The first period took place in 1989–2000; the second started in 2005 and is ongoing. Although we use the term Circassian nationalism to indicate the character of the whole movement, we call *nationalists* that group of organizations and activists who believe in territorial independence and the taking of action on the international level to achieve the strategic national interests. *Sovereignists* are similar, with the main difference being that they believe in unification of the Circassians as a single autonomous region within Russia and are less aggressive toward the Kremlin.

On the other side, *culturalists* argue that national interests are best served if the Circassians aim at acquiring more development of their culture, language, and political rights inside the regions where they live, without entering into the dangerous sphere of Russian federal or international politics (the same applies to similar organizations in the diaspora). Culturalists exercise linguistic and cultural nationalism. Circassian culturalists pursue the same political course as the Welsh nationalists who “saw the necessity of making Welsh once more an official language and the language of education if it was to survive” (Thomas 83). *Accommodationists* mainly consist of the local political elite and are incorporated into the Russian state policy. *Centrists* adopt a position to address the Circassian issue by avoiding the extremes of the movement, with the main organizational goal to bring the opposite sides of the movement together rather than to confront any of them. The centrist position was stronger during the first Circassian movement in 1989–2000 when the positions of the opposite sides – nationalists and accommodationists – were less different than during the second movement. The active involvement of external actors such as Russia and Georgia resulted in the polarization of the movement and activists had to take clear sides. This has prevented establishment of an active centrist strand and created a “centrist vacuum” in the contemporary Circassian movement.

The Circassian movement is based on three shared strategic goals: recognition of the genocide, repatriation of the diaspora, and unification of the territories. These strategic goals form the *ideological foundation* of the movement. The diversity of the movement emerges on the level of maintaining many tactical attitudes toward such issues as the 2014 Winter Olympics, the 450th anniversary of Russian–Circassian relations, the inclusion of Adygea in a federal district different from Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia, participation in the 2010 Russian census, the 131st Russian federal law on the principles of municipal division of land, and so on. These tactical issues form the *instrumental goals* of the movement.

These issues have been catalysts for Circassian national mobilization because the many Circassian activists regard them as obstacles that prevent the diaspora from returning to their homeland and that divide the Circassians within Russia, which results in the loss of their unique culture and language, though others argue that those issues are of not principal importance. For example, during the 2010 Russian census, the Circassian NGOs organized

a campaign demanding to be listed as one Circassian ethnicity instead of four separate ethnicities (Kabard, Adygean, Cherkess, and Shapsug), which the Circassian authorities silently blocked. Nationalists and sovereigntists opposed the accommodationists and culturalists during the celebration of the 450th anniversary of Russo–Circassian “unification,” which followed the 400th anniversary of Kabarda’s voluntarily joining the Muscovite principality in 1557, though the original event was denounced by post-Soviet scholars. The nationalists and sovereigntists pointed out that the Kabardian principality had equal status with the Muscovite principality in the middle of the sixteenth century and therefore could not have been incorporated into it, and that Kabarda was a free state until the expanding Russian Empire conquered it the nineteenth century.

The highest diversity of instrumental positions applies to the 2014 Olympics. The Circassian question is closely related to the Sochi Olympics in several symbolic ways. By an irony of history, the 2014 Olympic Games will mark the 150th anniversary of the Circassian defeat in 1864, when, after over a century of fighting, Tsar Alexander II declared victory for Russia. Every year on 21 May, Circassians around the world light 101 candles and observe a minute of silence in memory of the 101-year war. Sochi itself was the site of the war’s last battles, and its port was the place from which the Circassians were deported to the Ottoman Empire. Krasnaya Polyana (*Kbaada* in Circassian), the area that will be the center of the 2014 Olympic Games, was where, on 21 May 1864, a parade of Russian troops celebrated the end of the war. Sochi was named after the Circassian ethnic group *Shache*, who lived there until 1864. It was also the last capital of independent Circassia (1861–1864).

Nationalists demand unconditional cancelation of the 2014 Olympics. Sovereigntists are against the Olympics but want to use them to spread information about the Circassian issue. Centrists offer their own World Circassian Games as an alternative to the Sochi Olympics, which they want to use to spread information as well. Culturalists want Circassian elements to be included in the Olympics and support them on that condition. Accommodationists support the Olympics unconditionally and see them as an opportunity for development of the economy in the Circassian republics.

Some participants of the movement alter their positions according to changing situations. For example, during the Yeltsin era, under his slogan “Take as much sovereignty as you can swallow,” the accommodationists initiated a Treaty of Friendship and Partnership between Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia in 1992 and established the Interparliamentary Council of the three republics in 1997. Later, on 25 November 2008, the accommodationists of Karachaevo-Cherkessia organized the Circassian Congress in Cherkessk where the question of uniting the Circassian territories was brought up in public. But they completely changed their position after the Kremlin clearly opposed the idea.

Circassian organizations regard the tactical goals as instruments for achieving the strategic ideological goals. Accordingly, the achievement of a particular strategic goal does not lead to lessening of the activities of the movement. But the failure to achieve instrumental goals usually causes activation of the movement. For example, the Circassian movement against amalgamation of Adygea into Krasnodar Krai was an instrumental goal to achieve unification of the Circassian territories, and at the same time Circassians viewed this Kremlin initiative as an instrument of Russia’s strategic goal to Russify the Circassians. The Circassian movement managed to change the Kremlin’s plan and did not let Adygea be amalgamated into Krasnodar Krai, and this did not lessen the movement’s activity in general. But Adygea was included in a federal district different from Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia, which caused a new wave of Circassian activity. This led to nationalist activity because Circassian activists viewed this move as an attempt to maintain the division of the Circassians within Russia.

### **First Circassian movement, 1989–2000**

The first period of modern Circassian nationalism can be identified as a unification movement. Its main tendency was to form a common ideology and goals and overcome the division of the Circassian nation imposed by the Russian–Caucasian war and the Cold War.

The unification movement started after the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War. It emerged from an organization known as *Adyge Khasa*.<sup>2</sup> It was established in Nalchik in 1989. A well-known Circassian folklorist scholar, Zaur Nalo, became the leader of the organization in its most active period. The movement took sovereigntist form with an instrumental goal to establish a separate Kabardian Republic within Russia. The movement became an opposition to Valeri Kokov, leader of the accommodationists. The mayor of Nalchik, Felix Kharaev, was the administrative resource of the movement. When Valeri Kokov supported the opponents of Mikhail Gorbachev during the August Putsch in 1991, it undermined his legitimacy in Kabardino-Balkaria and provided the first dramatic moment in the development of Circassian nationalism. It led to a clash inside the republic and under pressure from the opposition Kokov had to resign from his position on 29 August 1991. But opposition candidate Kharaev could not win the presidential elections and lost to Kokov, who became president of Kabardino-Balkaria in 1992.

When the Georgian–Abkhaz war started in August 1992, Russian president Boris Yeltsin stated that Russia supported the principle of Georgia’s territorial integrity. Abkhazia is considered part of the Circassian world, and Circassians in Russia viewed Yeltsin’s support for Georgia negatively. The deployment of military troops, and the arrest and release of Musa Shanibov, the leader of the nationalist organization Confederation of Caucasian Nations, led to another wave of dramatic protests and to a clash with the army and police in Nalchik, leaving many people wounded. Over 1,500 Kabardian volunteers went to the Georgian–Abkhaz war under the leadership of a Nalchik-born retired Soviet colonel, Sultan Sosnaliev, who later became the commander of all Abkhaz forces and was appointed Abkhazia’s minister of defense. While the human resources of the Circassian movement were consumed by the Georgian–Abkhaz war, the political activity diverted to the international movement.

There were strong networks of Circassian Benevolent Organizations in Turkey, Jordan, Syria, and the United States. Some of them had been established since the middle of twentieth century. Most had culturalist goals: to preserve their language and culture and to fit into the socio-political systems of the states where they lived. Many prominent Circassian leaders participated in the building of modern statehood in Jordan and Turkey and later in Syria. Circassians developed a belief that they were highly effective in helping other nations build their states and faithfulness to their new states became regarded as a psychological characteristic of the Circassian nation. In 1991, the International Circassian Association (ICA) was established in Munich. This organization united Circassian movements in the homeland and the diaspora. Its first president was a prominent Circassian, Yuri Kalmykov, who was appointed Russia’s minister of justice two years later. For the only instance in recent history, the ICA managed to unite all Circassian strands and become a strong centrist movement. It not only united the activities of Circassians all around the world but also raised the Circassian movement to the international level. The ICA became a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) in 1994. A clear understanding of the three Circassian strategic goals has emerged over the last two decades as the result of a broad international movement, which has been marked by eight international Circassian Congresses

(Nalchik 1991, Maikop 1993, Cherkessk 1996, Krasnodar 1998, Nalchik 2000 and 2003, Istanbul 2006, and Maikop 2009).

Despite many disputes and confrontations within the Circassian movement, the different strands worked closely together and were very productive in promotion of the Circassian strategic goals. On 7 February 1992, the Parliament of Kabardino-Balkaria issued a resolution recognizing the Circassian Genocide. The 21st of May was designated Circassian Memorial Day for the victims of the Russian–Caucasian war. The parliaments of Adygea and Abkhazia issued similar resolutions on 29 April 1996 and 15 October 1997. At the same time, the leaders of Kabardino-Balkaria and Adygea sent appeals to the Duma to recognize the Circassian Genocide, but these were unsuccessful.

The fifth General Assembly of UNPO (15–19 July 1997) issued a Resolution on the Situation of the Circassian Nation, in which it called upon the Russian Federation and the international community

to acknowledge the genocide of the Circassian nation that took place in the nineteenth century and to grant the Circassian people status of an exile nation; to grant the Circassian people dual citizenship, both that of Russia and of their respective countries; [and] to ensure the Circassian people of the possibility to return to their historical land.

The movement reached its culmination at that time and started to decline because of internal disagreement. The central disagreement involved the issue of whether to appeal to the international community, even if it upset Russian authorities. After his speech at the 53rd session of the United Nations on 24 March 1997, Alexander Okhtov, the general secretary of the ICA, was impeached and excluded from the organization.

Competition and confrontation within the Circassian movement escalated in 2000. The accommodationists used their administrative recourses to legally close all organizations that represented the nationalistic strand. In 2000, the sovereigntist leader of Adyge Khasa in Nalchik, Valeri Khatajukov, lost elections to accommodationist Mukhamed Khafitse, and Adyge Khasa accordingly shifted its positions. The same year, something similar happened to the centrist movement when the accommodationists, using their membership in the ICA and their administrative recourses, managed to elect an ex-speaker of the Parliament of Kabardino-Balkaria, Zaurbi Nakhushev, president of the ICA. The loss of balance in the movement led the ICA to shift its positions from centrist to culturalist ones. Both Adyge Khasa in Nalchik and the ICA have been working in alliance with the accommodationist movement and particularly in closest contact with the government of Kabardino-Balkaria since 2000. This shift toward the accommodationists weakened the centrist, sovereigntist, and nationalist strands, which led to a significant decrease in the activities of the whole Circassian movement in both the homeland and the diaspora.

Recent studies of the region explain the general character of “truly mass mobilization” processes in the post-Soviet North Caucasus (Derluguian 201). These are exemplified by the ebb and flow of Circassian nationalistic activities. The experience of the Circassian movement in 1989–2000 showed that different strands played their important roles in its development. The nationalists explored new perspectives on the international level. Sovereignists developed ideas to promote the Circassian issue in the homeland and the diaspora. Centrists stabilized the movement and managed to unify it all over the world. Culturalists did the job of establishing the main chain of Circassian organizations in the diaspora. The accommodationists used their administrative resources to issue important resolutions on the genocide in the parliaments of Kabardino-Balkaria and Adygea. The shrinking of the movement illuminated another important characteristic of Circassian nationalism. The overwhelming superiority of a part of the movement may cause not

only the elimination of some strands but also the weakening of the whole movement. The Circassian movement actually froze for half a decade from 2000 to 2005. Later, the accommodationists and culturalists realized that the absence of other strands could be to their own disadvantage because they were not able to raise many important issues that used to be addressed by the centrists, sovereigntists, and nationalists. Without a viable, independent national movement, the accommodationists lost their power, however limited, to serve the goals of the Circassian movement, because the Russian state no longer viewed them as a necessary moderating counterweight to the most extreme nationalist groups after the latter had been neutralized.

### **Main strands of the second Circassian movement since 2005**

The experience of the author, who watched the development of the second movement closely, shows that four basic factors have to be combined for the creation of a separate strand in the Circassian movement (see Table 1). These are administrative support, several similar non-government organizations or one with several branches in different regions, maintenance of tactical instrumental goals, and development of a method to pursue strategic ideological goals. The tactical goals come from administrative supporters, who use them as instruments to resolve political problems which they cannot address directly and for which they need the help of non-government organizations. The strategic goals are gained by the organizations themselves.

The second Circassian movement emerged in Maikop in 2005 and started as a sovereigntist strand. The President of Adygea, Khazret Sovmen, initiated it by establishing the Committee in Defense of the Statutes of Adygea on 21 April 2005, with the participation of several Circassian organizations. The movement was instrumentally pointed against the Kremlin's efforts to merge Adygea into Krasnodar Krai. The Circassian Congress in Maikop, a new organization under the leadership of Murat Berzegov, became the center of the movement. It established contacts with many other Circassian organizations, initiated creation of similar Circassian congresses in the homeland and diaspora, and persuaded them to defend the status of the republic and support Khazret Sovmen.

The Circassian Congress in Maikop extended its activity by establishing its network in Nalchik and Cherkessk domestically, while also creating Circassian Congresses in Israel and several countries of the European Union. The movement attracted many sovereigntist organizations that had been inactive at that time. Nationalist activists joined the movement as well, adopting sovereigntist positions because of the absence of a separate clear nationalistic movement in that time. The movement did not have united structure, but the Circassian Congress in Maikop was recognized as its main ideological force.

On 1 July 2005, the Circassian Congress in Maikop appealed to the Russian State Duma to recognize the Circassian Genocide. On 17 November 2005, six Circassian leaders wrote a letter to the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. The government of Adygea organized a special conference (3 September 2005), as well as an Assembly of Circassian People (21 May 2006), both devoted to the issue of the status of the republic. While the Russian State Duma prepared its negative answer, sovereigntists formed a broad coalition. Twenty Circassian organizations from nine countries signed a petition to the president of the European Parliament, Josep Borrell Fontelles, on 11 October 2006, asking that the Circassian Genocide be recognized. The Circassian Congress of Maikop repeated the request two years later, to the next president, Hans-Gert Pottering. Neither request was answered at all. Sovereigntists criticized the 2014 Sochi Olympics for the fact that they will be hosted in the last capital of Circassia on the 150th anniversary of the Circassian

Table 1. Conceptual map of the Circassian movement.

	Nationalists	Sovereignists	Centrists	Culturalists	Accommodationists
Reason for start	Protesting against 2014 Olympics in Sochi	Protesting against amalgamation of Adygea into Russian region and giving away Kabardian territories to neighbor nation	To establish a common ground for the unification of the movement	Protesting against giving away Kabardian territories to neighbor nation	Protesting against giving away Kabardian territories to neighbor nation and supporting Kremlin's policy of inclusion of Adygea into different federal district
Administrative support	Jamestown Foundation (G. Howard)	President of Adygea in 2005–06 (Kh. Sovment), local businessmen in 2008 (S. Derev) and 2009 (V. Kardanov)	C. Özdemir, MP European Parliament	Presidents of KBR (A. Kanokov) and Adygea (A. Tkhakushinov)	Kremlin
Leading organizations	CCI NJ (Y. Yaguar and Z. Barsik)	CC in Maikop in 2005–07 (M. Berzegov), Khase Nalchik since 2009 (I. Yaganov)	Federation of European Circassians (A. Dasdemir), Circassiada (S. Zhemukhov, A. Bekshokov)	Gihan Gantemir (Turkey), Kanshobi Ajakhov (Russia)	Presidents of KBR (A. Kanokov) and Adygea (A. Tkhakushinov)

Genocide. But they did not demand cancelation of the Olympics, regarding it as an impossible mission and wanting to use the event to attract the attention of the international community to the Circassian issue.

The resignation of Khazret Sovmen from the presidential position led to a drop in the activity of the sovereigntist strand in Maikop. In October 2006, Aslan Tkhakushinov became the new president of Adygea. He held strictly accommodationist positions, supporting the 2014 Olympics and not opposing the division imposed between three Circassian Republics by the inclusion of Adygea into a different federal district from Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. The leader of the sovereigntists, Murat Berzegov, unsuccessfully tried to get support from the new regime by praising the new president in the media. The sovereigntist movement in Maikop came to an end after someone threatened Berzegov's life and then set fire to his apartment. In 2010, Murat Berzegov applied for political asylum in the United States ("Murat").

The sovereigntists existed for several years without a united center. On 25 November 2008, for the first time domestically, sovereigntists brought up the question of unification of the Circassian republics at the Assembly of Circassian People in Cherkessk.

While the sovereigntist movement was dispersed in the homeland, a nationalist strand started in the diaspora. It was initiated by a US think tank, the Jamestown Foundation, which provided administrative support for the Circassian Cultural Institute in New Jersey by organizing conferences. The beginning of the nationalist strand in the diaspora coincided with the worsening of US–Russian relations throughout 2006–2007 after the unsuccessful meeting between the presidents of the United States and Russia (George Bush and Vladimir Putin) during the G8 Summit. At the beginning, the nationalist strand was very weak, having only two of the basic components of a movement, administrative support and organization. It tried to use the instrumental goal of the Maikop sovereigntists and speak against the inclusion of Adygea into Krasnodar Krai. The New Jersey nationalists attempted to use the methods developed by the Maikop sovereigntists, primarily aiming for recognition of the genocide. The nationalist movement gained an instrumental goal after it became pointed against the 2014 Sochi Olympics. The Circassian Cultural Institute became the center of a nationalist movement. It united and coordinated the remnants of the Maikop sovereigntist strand and formed a coalition between about 30 Circassian nationalist organizations. The beginning of the nationalist movement was the participation in a conference, *The Circassians: Past, Present, and Future*, organized by the Jamestown Foundation in Washington, DC, in May 2007.

Another movement started in Nalchik in 2008. Arsen Kanokov, the president of Kabardino-Balkaria, initiated this new movement. At its beginning, the movement formed a very broad coalition. It aimed to bring back to activity old participants of the first Circassian movement of 1989–2000 and unite all strands. It brought together different leaders – accommodationist Mukhamed Khafitse (Adyge Khasa in Nalchik), culturalists Muazin Khachetlov (Kabardian Congress), Kasbulat Dzamikhov (ICA), Jantemir Gubachikov (Union of Industrialists in Nalchik), Jilabi Kalmikov, Khasan Gergov, and Muaed Chechenov, centrists Alexei Bekshokov (Union of Abkhaz Volunteers) and Sufian Zhemukhov, and sovereigntists Ibragim Yaganov (Guaran), Ruslan Keshev (Circassian Congress in Nalchik), and Zamir Shukhov (World Circassian Brotherhood). At the beginning, the movement included Musa Shanibov, the prominent nationalist leader from the first Circassian movement of 1989–2000, but he separated from it during the next year, as did the sovereigntists and centrists. Instrumentally, the movement was concerned with the 131st Russian federal law, which caused redistribution of the lands in Kabardino-Balkaria in favor of Balkar municipalities. The roots of the problem reside in Stalin's division of

Circassians and Karachaevo-Balkars in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. Both ethnic groups believe that their cohabitation is temporary and some day they will break away from each other and rejoin their ethnic kin. Because of so-called kin ethnicity, Cherkess of Karachaevo-Cherkessia split from Kabarda (Eastern Circassia) in 1822 and never formed a unified state with Western Circassia; opponents to the idea of “rejoining” or “reincorporating” regard it as ahistorical. This is how members of the national movement view the issue, though it is a view that is not necessarily based on an accurate understanding of historical processes. The idea is rather based on the fact that the Circassians occupied one massive continuum of the land and the Russian conquest and Stalin’s territorial divisions interfered with the process of forming a unified state. The same applies to Karachais and Balkars, who never formed a united administrative entity. That is why both ethnic groups regard any contemporary redistribution of land between municipalities as changing their *future* borders. On 14 February 2009, the broad Circassian coalition, under the influence of the government of Kabardino-Balkaria, organized a round table against the 131st federal law with participation of 26 organizations – including, alongside Kabardians, Balkars, and Russians, diaspora organizations of Jews, Polish, Estonians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Armenians, Azeri, Dagestanians, Greeks, Tatars, Ossetians, Turk-Meskhetians, and Koreans.

Soon the movement became divided, even though all the participants of the movement completely agreed on their attitude toward the 131st Federal law. The line of division was the attitude of the activists toward the administrative background of the movement. On 4 April 2009, the movement organized a forum against the 131st federal law. Right after the forum, the movement broke into two parts. Seven organizations created the culturalist Coordination Council of Circassian Social Organizations of Kabardino-Balkaria. The new organization had the administrative support of the president of Kabardino-Balkaria. Later it started printing its own newspaper, the *Voice of Kabarda*. It revived the culturalist ICA as well, after it initiated election of a presidential advisor, Kanshobi Ajakhov, as the new president of the ICA.

Four other organizations joined together to create a sovereigntist organization, Khasa, in Nalchik. This new group had no particular leader, but represented the constituent group equally. Valeri Kardanov, the head of the regional branch of Russian oil company Rosneft, became the administrative supporter of this group. Kardanov was regarded as a rival of President Kanokov in the upcoming appointment of the leader of the republic in 2010. The two Adyge Khasas in Maikop and Sukhum gave their support to the new sovereigntist movement. The new culturalist and sovereigntist strands worked together for a while and organized a joint meeting on 17 November 2010, where the sovereigntists made a statement demanding that the president of Kabardino-Balkaria resign from his position. That caused the final split of two movements and the sovereigntist Khasa in Nalchik adopted an instrumental goal from its administrative supporter: it turned against the president, Arsen Kanokov. Later, the leaders of the movement, Ruslan Keshev and Ibragim Yaganov, were cruelly beaten by unidentified people.

### **Incomplete strands and the importance of four basic factors for Circassian movements to develop**

A similar split took place later in Turkey, when on 17 April 2011 Circassian sovereigntist activists demanded that the Turkish constitution be amended to let Circassians identify themselves by their own ethnic names. The sovereigntists were not supported by KAFFED, a union of 58 Turkish Circassian organizations. KAFFED (Kafkas Dernekleri

Federasyonu – Federation of the Caucasian Cultural Centers) is a culturalist organization that works closely with Circassian culturalists and accommodationists in Russia. The sovereigntist organizations (Patriots of Circassia, Caucasus Forum, Samsun United Caucasus Association, and others) separated from the culturalists and made several attempts to create a coalition in Turkey. The sovereigntists had several active organizations and a strong instrumental goal. However, the sovereigntists in Turkey have not been able to form a new strand because they did not have administrative support and they did not have their own approach to any of the three Circassian strategic goals.

The movement against the 131st Russian federal law split into a third part on 4 April 2009, when a new centrist movement, Circassiada, started under the leadership of the author of this article and Alexei Bekshokov, the president of the Union of Abkhaz Volunteers. They proposed a project to organize Circassian Olympic Games to be held in Nalchik in 2012. The authors conducted presentations in Russia, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, the United States, and Great Britain, and climbed Mount Elbrus, the highest mountain in Europe. Branches of Circassiada were established throughout the diaspora under representatives Jonty Yamisha (United States), Metin Sonmez (Turkey), and Osama Lybzu (Syria). The movement followed the example of the Jewish Olympics (Maccabiah) and the Pan-Armenian Games. But Circassiada could not form a separate strand. It had an instrumental goal to use the Sochi Olympics, and strong project organization, but like the sovereigntists in Turkey, it did not have administrative support or its own methods to achieve strategic goals.

Another centrist organization, EuroXase, exists in Brussels since 2006 under the leadership of Admiral Dasdemir. It has a strong administrative support from Cem Özdemir, a member of the European Parliament. But it does not have instrumental goals and did not maintain its own methods for pursuing the strategic goals, which prevents it from being active and forming a new strand.

There was a sovereigntist strand in Cherkessk, supported by Nazir Khapsirokov, a high-ranking Kremlin bureaucrat, and the economically influential family of the Derevs, but it lacked an organization body and strategy. They initiated several sovereigntist political actions in the region, including Assemblies of the Circassian People, which promoted separation of Cherkessia from Karachaevo-Cherkessia and in 2008 issued a famous statement about unification of all Circassian regions into a single Circassian republic within the Russian Federation. However, the sovereigntists in Cherkessk never created a separate strand and followed the sovereigntist movements in Maikop in 2005–2009 and in Nalchik since 2009. The movement in Cherkessk originates from the rivalry between the very strong political and business elite of the Circassian minority and the weaker Karachai majority. The influential Circassian elite activates a sovereigntist movement every time it is not satisfied with its positions in the republic. But the Circassian elite itself is too close to the Kremlin to allow development of a separate sovereigntist movement. This case is especially interesting because the instrumental goal of the administrative supporters looks very much like a strategic goal. However, the participants of the movement do not have any realistic plan for how to create a united Circassian Republic, despite their 2008 statement.

The issue about administrative support and instrumental goals brings us to the popular debates about the “purity” of the strands when opposing organizations accuse each other of serving their administrative supporters instead of working for strategic goals. Analysis of the structure of the Circassian movement shows that having administrative support is not an indication of betrayal of Circassian national interests but rather a vital necessity in establishing a separate strand inside the movement. Misunderstanding this political

reality leads to misleading debates and conclusions on theoretical and practical levels. Moscow analysts of the Circassian issue argue that the different centers of the movement cannot be regarded as purely nationalist because they are under the influence of their administrative supporters (Kazenin). It is obvious that the strands reach beyond the instrumental goals and gain ideological meaning applying to the strategic goals. The president of Khazret Sovmen supported sovereigntists in Maikop in defending the status of Adygea but they also appealed to the European Parliament for recognition of the genocide. President Arsen Kanokov initiated a movement against the 131st federal law but it obtained separate goals and part of it even turned against him. The Jamestown Foundation, which is well known for its criticism of the modern Russian regime, gave support to the nationalists in New Jersey, but they pursued Circassian interests.

### **Practices of the Circassian movement**

The Circassian movement has several centers with administrative support and different methods of achieving common goals. During the first movement in 1989–2000, the structure of the ICA was developed to coordinate different strands, but the movement since 2005 lacks such a structure. An attempt to coordinate part of the movement was made on 26 December 2010, when 18 organizations created the Coordination Council of Circassian Social Organizations of Russia. But it never became active.

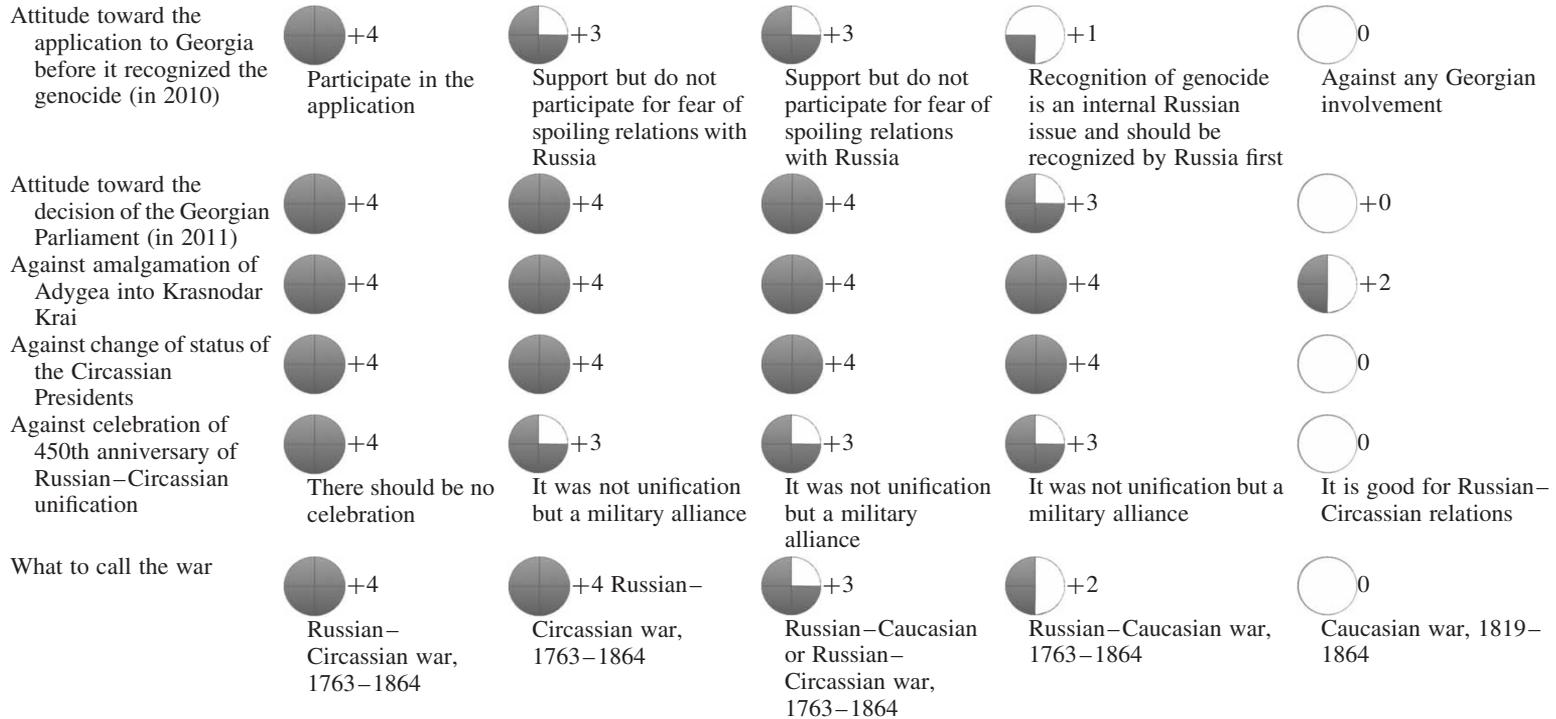
The modern Circassian strands have remained dispersed and not centralized structurally except for their ideological unity based on the common strategic goals. Table 2 shows the differences and similarities between the five strands in the movement in their approaches to the strategic and tactical Circassian issues. The evaluation scale of the table is based on the basic positions and the level of activity of different strands in the Circassian movement. Nationalists support all strategic and tactical goals and are evaluated as the most active in the movement by the highest scale (+4). Sovereigntists support all strategic and most tactical goals (+3). Centrists support all strategic and some tactical goals (+2). Culturalists support some and oppose some strategic and tactical goals (+1); and accommodationists support some and oppose most strategic and tactical goals (0).

This article is entirely devoted to the internal logics of the Circassian movement; we deliberately avoid addressing the external activities around it. But it should be mentioned that Russia has the biggest influence on the Circassian movement. Two positions in Table 2 are especially important for understanding the nature of Russian influence on the Circassian movement. The anti-Sochi movement is the only issue where the strands have purely different positions, which can be explained by the fact that it is affected by the clear position of the Kremlin. All the strands have similar (negative) attitudes towards the 131st federal law, because it is the only issue that does not have any ideological value for the Kremlin.

The main differences between opposing Circassian strands are based on different approaches toward the Russian role in the movement. Accommodationists and culturalists regard the Circassian issue as an internal Russian problem, while centrists, sovereigntists, and nationalists claim that it is an international one. The different approaches to this issue have caused polarization of the contemporary Circassian movement. Nationalists in the diaspora addressed this problem on the conceptual level on 8 April 2008, at a conference, *Russia and the Circassians: Internal Problem or International Matter?*, organized at the Harvard Kennedy School. Nationalist activists insisted that the Circassian problem is an international one and is a matter for international law because the Circassian diaspora is “deprived of the right to regain our historic homeland, Circassia” (Tlisova).

Table 2. Positions of different strands in the Circassian movement.

	Nationalists	Sovereignists	Centrists	Culturalists	Accommodationists
Basic positions in the movement	 +4 Support all strategic and tactical goals	 +3 Support all strategic and most tactical goals	 +2 Support all strategic and some tactical goals	 +1 Support some, oppose some strategic and tactical goals	 0 Support some, oppose most strategic and tactical goals
Level of activity in the promotion of the Circassian issue	 +4 Active on every occasion	 +3 Active on occasions when it does not spoil relations with Russia	 +2 Active regularly	 +1 Partly active	 0 There is no Circassian issue
Strategic goal: recognition of the genocide by Russia	 +4	 +4	 +4	 +3	 0
Strategic goal: repatriation of the diaspora	 +4	 +4	 +4	 +2	 +2
Strategic goal: unification of the Circassian territories	 +4 Circassian territories should be united and independent	 +3 Circassian territories should be united within Russia	 +3 Circassian territories should be united within Russia	 +1 Neutral to unification of Circassia because it is not realistic	 0 Support inclusion of Circassian republics into different federal districts
Against 2014 Sochi Olympics – <i>the only issue where all have different positions</i>	 +4 Outrageous to hold them on the land of genocide	 +3 Against Olympics, but they can be used to solve some Circassian problems	 +2 Neutral to the Olympics – try to use it to solve Circassian issue	 +1 Circassian elements should be included in Olympics	 0 Support the Olympics
Against the 131st federal law – <i>the only issue where all have similar positions</i>	 +4	 +4	 +4	 +4	 +4



While sharing with sovereigntists the concept of recognition of the genocide by the international community, nationalists have different approach to other issues. They demand unconditional cancelation of the 2014 Sochi Olympics and have a goal to build an independent Circassian state. Following the pattern of the previous sovereigntist movement, on 4 October 2007 the nationalists appealed to the Russian president Vladimir Putin to cancel the Sochi Olympics and recognize the Circassian Genocide, but did not get an answer. On the same day, nationalists in the United States and Turkey organized demonstrations in front of the Russian consulates in New York and Istanbul with the slogan “Free Circassia Now” (Tokhtamish). Circassian nationalists in Turkey established the Organization Committee of Sochi—the Land of Genocide, and on 23 July 2007, twelve organizations signed an appeal to the International Olympic Committee to cancel the Sochi Olympics.

On 19 September 2007, an unexplained incident happened. The Russian customs service in Sochi arrested and kept in custody for five days, without any explanation, Cihan Candemir, the leader of KAFFED. At the same time that Cihan Candemir was in custody, the International Olympic Committee answered the nationalists, promising to look into the ecological and social implications of the Sochi Olympics but avoiding a direct answer to the request to cancel them (“IOC Reply”). After that indifferent answer, on 4 October 2007, the nationalists organized demonstrations against the Sochi Olympics in front of the Russian consulates in Istanbul and New York (Zhemukhov, “The Circassian Dimension”).

The Organization Committee of Sochi—the Land of Genocide became the No Sochi 2014 Campaign, and its center moved to the United States, uniting 30 nationalistic organizations and developing “14 Reasons to Oppose the Sochi Olympics.” The anti-Sochi demonstration during the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver was one of the most successful actions of the nationalists, with a message to the world: “If you let the 2014 games go on as planned in Russia, you’ll be skiing on the graves of our oppressed ancestors” (Alexander). The activity of the campaign was based on the idea that the Sochi Olympics represent the Circassians’ last chance to reclaim their past and if the Olympics go forward, “it erases our people, it erases the crime that has been done because the whole world is saying ‘okay’ to Russia, the whole world is saying ‘nothing happened here and we are going to come here and celebrate peace between the nations’” (Alexander).

The Vancouver demonstration by nationalists also gave a new impulse to the sovereigntist, centrist, and culturalist movements in their demands to include Circassian elements in the 2014 Olympics. Circassians around the world were struck less by the demonstration than by the way the Canadian organizers of the Vancouver Games connected to the ideological foundation of the Olympics showing respect to the indigenous peoples of Canada who were called the “first nations” (Goble, “In Vancouver”).

The culturalist movement, with the leadership of ICA, organized many appeals to the organizers of the Sochi Olympics to include Circassian elements in the games. The Parliament of Adygea spoke from culturalist positions on 24 March 2010, even with unusual criticism of Russian federal policy, expressing that “to great sorrow the state and civil structures absolutely ignore the history and culture of the Circassians, the indigenous people of Black Sea shore. The Circassian element has been fully ignored during the solemn transition of the Olympic Fire from Vancouver to Sochi” (“Parlament Adygei”). In response, the Russian Olympic Committee agreed that Circassian elements should be included at Sochi. But the nationalists were not happy with this position of the Circassian parliamentarians, and six organizations in the diaspora issued a statement: “It was with great disappointment and outrage that we learned of the appeal of the State Council – Khasa to the Russian Olympic Committee to include a Circassian component

in the planned 2014 Olympics in Sochi, as well as the subsequent affirmative response of the Russian Olympic Committee.” Their main concern was that “Russia will now have support of these Olympics from official Adygea, and they will use it to silence all of our appeals on the international stage” (“Open Letter”).

Culturalists in Turkey shifted their position as well. On 25 October 2010, there was held an Assembly of Circassian People where they made a decision to concentrate specifically on Circassian issues instead of all the Caucasian ones as they had in the past. The Circassian organizations in Turkey formed a separate movement by breaking away from Turkey’s pan-Caucasian organization.

On the contrary, the accommodationists never changed their position. At the beginning, the accommodationists used two arguments in favor of the Olympics. The presidents of Kabardino-Balkaria and Adygea argued that the republics should have a chance to participate in the Olympics through three important projects: hosting part of the games in Elbrus (Kabardino-Balkaria) and Lago-Naki (Adygea) and participating in other economic projects in Sochi to develop the overall economy of the North Caucasus; building a road that would transform the region into one large mountain-and-sea resort, where tourists could swim in the Black Sea and then drive half a day to ski on the slopes of Mount Elbrus; and including Circassian elements in the Sochi Olympic symbols to spread information about the Circassians throughout the world. But the Kremlin did not follow up on any of those initiatives; and now the accommodationists had to oppose the anti-Sochi Circassian movement without having any benefits to show for their efforts.

The Federation of European Circassians under the leadership of Admiral Dasdemir represents a classic example of the centrist movement. It is supported by Cem Özdemir, a member of the European Parliament (The Greens–European Free Alliance). Since 2006, it has organized annual Circassian Days in the European Parliament, where representatives of all strands of the Circassian movement have participated (except accommodationists). The organizers of the Circassian Days were opposed from the other side as well, being accused by nationalists and sovereigntists for their soft position toward the Circassian problems. High levels of polarization of the movement and criticism of the center from both sides prevent development of a strong centrist movement. A “centrist vacuum” is one of the characteristic features of the contemporary Circassian movement.

The centrist movement adopted a more supportive view, offering to use the run-up to 2014 as a means to spread information about and draw attention to their cause. In April 2009, centrists Sufian Zhemukhov and Aleksei Bekshokov proposed that a Circassian Olympics be held in 2012 as a response to the Sochi Olympics, to remind the world about the area’s native inhabitants. Many Circassian domestic communities and throughout the diaspora expressed their support for Circassiada. At the same time, it became another example of a movement with a centrist vacuum. Nationalistic organizations opposed the idea on the grounds that “it will divert and confuse the Circassian world of what is important at task and that is opposing the Sochi Olympics” (“Circassian Olympics”). From the opposite side, accommodationists and culturalists in the homeland and the diaspora approved the idea, but regarded it as unrealistic because the Kremlin did not support the project of a separate 2012 Circassian Games in Nalchik. Circassiada lost support after its founders refused to include the project in the cultural program of the 2014 Sochi Olympics and the Russian authorities instead organized the 2011 Caucasus Games in Karachaevo-Cherkessia.

Disputes also developed around the genocide issue. While all strands across the Circassian movement agree that the tragic events of the Russian–Circassian war (1763–

1864) were in fact genocide, there are still differences in viewpoint. Accommodationists refer to the genocide as a history that should not be disturbed so that it will not negatively affect contemporary Russian–Circassian relations. Culturalists argue that Russia should recognize the Circassian Genocide and regard this as an internal Russian problem. Centrists and sovereigntists agree with the necessity to appeal to Russia, but support those who appeal to foreign states and the international community. Nationalists believe that it is useless to appeal to Russia and actively engage foreign countries.

There were many discussions between Circassian, Russian, and Western intellectuals on the subject as well. One of the arguments against recognition of the Circassian Genocide is that Russia fears the issue of reparations. Centrists proposed a solution that the Circassian side should renounce any claims to pecuniary compensation, in exchange for Russian recognition of the genocide, repatriation of the diaspora, and creation of a united Circassian Republic within the Russian Federation (Zhemukhov “Skating”). The *New York Times* featured the project in its Idea of the Day section (“Genocide and the 2014 Olympics”). Sovereigntist Murat Berzegov in his discussion with Russian writer Yakov Gordin developed a different argument, that “the financial question is not unbearable for Russia if she is ready to spend 12 billion dollars on the Sochi Olympics” (“Cherkesy”).

Another argument against the recognition of the genocide was that it happened as long ago as a century and a half, which makes it inappropriate to talk about as a contemporary problem. In response to this, the nationalists in the diaspora developed the idea of an “Enduring Circassian Genocide” which did not end in 1864 but is ongoing because Russia does not allow expelled Circassians to return to their homeland. This concept became a characteristic feature of the nationalist movement. Sovereigntists in Maikop and Nalchik developed the idea that Stalin’s division of the Russian Circassians into four groups and their lands into six regions was a continuation of the genocide, as was the division of the Circassian territories between different federal districts in contemporary Russia.

On 6 April 2008, the Parliament of Israel fulfilled the request of the Circassian community and established the 21st of May as an official Day of Memory and Sorrow of the Circassian People.

After the Russian–Georgian war in August 2008, the Circassian nationalist movement approached Georgia with the help of the Jamestown Foundation. The series of events in that direction was called by one observer a “War of Conferences” (Shmulevich). In March 2010, the Jamestown Foundation and Ilia State University in Tbilisi organized a conference in Georgia titled Hidden Nations, Enduring Crimes: The Circassians and the Peoples of the North Caucasus Between Past and Future. At the end of the conference, the Circassian participants signed an appeal to Georgia’s Parliament to recognize as genocide the massacres and deportations of Circassians committed by Russia in the nineteenth century. They based their appeal on the concept of “Enduring Circassian Genocide,” stating that the Circassian people continue to suffer from the consequences of those crimes and policies. The Jamestown Foundation held several other conferences in Washington, DC, and Tbilisi.

On 21 May 2010, Circassian nationalists held demonstrations in front of the Russian consulates in the United States, Germany, Turkey, and Israel. They expressed their traditional slogans: “Free Circassia Now,” “Recognize the Circassian Genocide,” and “Stop the Sochi Olympics of 2014.”

Circassian organizations and activists were pleased that the Circassian question was making it to the international scene and that the Russian government would not be able

to disregard the issue any longer. But they were divided in their attitude toward the fact that the issue was raised in Tbilisi. Sovereignists and centrists supported the appeal to the Georgian Parliament, saying they would support genocide recognition by any country, while accommodationists and culturalists considered the Tbilisi conference simply Georgian propaganda and said that the Circassian issue was not Georgia's business and should be solved only by Russia.

On 28 September 2010, a Circassian delegation submitted an appeal to the Estonian Parliament with a request to push their cause in European institutions. The idea belonged to American analyst Paul Goble, who worked at universities in Tallinn and Tartu and has been decorated by the governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania for his work in promoting Baltic independence and the withdrawal of Russian forces from those formerly occupied lands (Goble, "Circassians").

On the eve of the 147th anniversary of the Circassian Genocide, it became known that the Georgian Parliament was going to recognize it. This caused an intrigue in the Circassian movement. Nationalistic organizations (Circassian Forum of Jordan, and Circassian Congresses of Belgium, Israel, Germany, and Russia) made separate appeals to the Georgian Parliament, encouraging it to make a decision. From the other side, the culturalist ICA appealed to the Russian State Duma with a "Program to Save and Rehabilitate the Circassian Culture and Nation" (Chek).

On 20 May 2011, the Georgian Parliament voted to recognize the nineteenth-century killings and deportations of ethnic Circassians by tsarist Russia as genocide (Barry). The resolution of the Georgian Parliament was legally based on two ideas developed during the first and second movements accordingly – on the resolution of the Parliament of Kabardino-Balkaria in 1992 regarding the Circassian Genocide, and on the concept of "enduring genocide."

## **Conclusion**

The Circassian movement has been very active since 1989. It developed a clear ideology and made significant efforts toward achieving its three strategic goals. The Circassian Genocide has been recognized by the parliaments of Kabardino-Balkaria (1992), Adygea (1996), Abkhazia (1997), and Georgia (2011). Efforts have been made to overcome the division of the Circassian lands and to propose the goal of uniting Kabarda, Adygea, and Cherkessia in a Circassian Republic within the Russian Federation (2008). The repatriation of Circassians started in 1990s but stopped later. But there are easy visa regimes between many countries with large Circassian diaspora populations and recently a non-visa agreement was established between Russia and Turkey, which allows many millions of members of the Circassian diaspora to visit their homeland, though the restrictions on re-immigration remain.

The opportunity to address – both in positive and negative approaches – the holding of the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, the last capital of Circassia, on the 150th anniversary of the Circassian Genocide, created new possibilities for the Circassian movement, especially after the recognition of the Circassian Genocide by Georgia. Russia has not developed ways to address the Circassian issue yet and supposedly will after the presidential elections in 2012. Some Russian analysts suggest that the Kremlin should address at least minor issues of the Circassian problem (Markedonov).

The main question remains what actions Russia will take toward the Circassian issue regarding the upcoming 2014 Sochi Olympics. On the one hand, the Kremlin cannot take any effective hard measures against the Circassian movement because it has become an

international issue and it would damage its reputation in the international community and undermine the very meaning of holding the prestigious Olympic Games. On the other hand, the Kremlin cannot positively resolve the Circassian issues because that would put it in direct confrontation with the very dangerous Russian nationalistic movement, which is gaining strength much more rapidly than Circassian nationalism.

The Circassian movement will develop further during the upcoming years before the 2014 Sochi Olympics. The fact that culturalists did not organize any anti-Georgian protests after the recognition of the genocide by Georgia indicates the possibility of stopping the polarization inside the Circassian movement and the creation of a strong centrist strand that could unite the whole movement. The recognition of the Circassian Genocide coincided with a remarkable event. That same day, 20 May 2011, Marina Mezova, a young Circassian alpinist from Russia, climbed Mount Everest and raised the Circassian flag on the highest spot of the planet. While the nationalists, supported by sovereigntists and centrists, succeeded in their application for the recognition of genocide, on the same day, accommodationists and culturalists sponsored a Circassian woman's ascent of Mount Everest.

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### Notes

1. The terms *nationalist*, *sovereigntist*, *centrist*, *culturalist*, and *accommodationist* will be defined later in the article.
2. Adige Khasa (literarily Circassian Parliament) was a legislative institution presented in most Circassian principalities before the Russian conquer. Nowadays, it is a common title for many Circassian NGOs in Russia and diaspora communities. The Parliament of Adygea Republic is called Khase, as well.

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