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POLYETHNIC AND
POLIRELIGIOUS GEORGIA

THREAT OR ADVANTAGE
TO TREASURE

Giorgi Masalkin

Library of Virtual Democracy Academy

George Masalkini

Polyethnicity and Polyreligiousness of Georgia -
Threat or an Advantage to Treasure

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INTRODUCTION

GLOBAL CONTEXT
"IN SEARCH OF A NEW IDENTITY"

We begin by discussing one of the most pressing and complex topics - the identity of the nation and its ethnic and political dimensions. More specifically, we will try to answer the following questions:

- When and under what conditions was the Georgian nation formed?
- What is ethnic nationalism and what is civic nationalism?
- What is a nation based on ethnicity and what is a civil nation?
- What is the phenomenon of the "search for new identities" in the modern world?
- What is the legal (in a broad sense) situation of national (or ethnic) minorities in Georgia and how successful is the policy pursued to wards them?
- What does polyethnicity and polyreligiousness for the sustainable (safe) development of Georgia mean - a threat or an achievement to foster?
- What is the well-known dichotomy truth – what does patriotism look like today?
  We will also discuss the issues of autonomy, language, education policy and other related topics.

The national identity, in my opinion, is the foremost issue on the agenda of the modern world. It can be said unequivocally that we are dealing with a new process of the **search for a national identity** which is taking place against the background of the **phenomenon of the radicalization** of modern human consciousness. Radicalism itself can be considered as an eternal companion in the history of mankind which is activated under certain conditions ... and in the modern world these conditions have manifested themselves. One of the main reasons for these conditions, as we have already said, is to be found

in the dramatic process of searching for a new identity in the world. On the one hand, there is the so-called "Post-colonial Syndrome" which is widespread in the West; that is, a sense of guilt and shame towards former colonies and the colonial past in general. On the other hand, there is the socio-political doctrine of political correctness which is somewhat related to this aforementioned syndrome. These two phenomena contributed to the formation of a certain political culture in Western societies and established certain semantic rules and legal norms.

This relatively new political culture is not free from the risks of a political and social nature. Thus, for example, political correctness as a "holy cow" creates new ideological taboos while the discussion of some issues and problems is either banned altogether or is accompanied by numerous written and unwritten rules and restrictions. It is because of these ideological prohibitions and frameworks that a number of identity problems and challenges have not been and - cannot be - identified and analyzed.

In recent years, a difficult and controversial process of migration has been taking place in Europe which has led to the radicalization of attitudes among the broad masses of Europeans. A European with traditional values, as ultimately formed in the second half of the twentieth century, is almost non-existent today. In the public statements of leading European politicians and analysts, one will often hear about the failure of multiculturalism in Europe which allows us to link the phenomena of radicalization of consciousness and the collapse of multicultural politics.

In a speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg in 2018, incumbent **French President Emmanuel Macron** called on the EU countries to unite against populist and nationalist tendencies as he saw them as a threat to Europe's liberal-democratic values. "There seems to be a certain European civil war: **national selfishness and negativity seems to take precedence over what brings us together.** There is a

fascination with the illiberal and that is growing all the time."[1]

Let us recall the statement of another European political leader. On October 16, 2010 in Potsdam, **German Chancellor Angela Merkel** said that the concept of **multiculturalism had «utterly failed»** in her country and that Germany did not need migrants who could not speak German. Indeed, Angela Merkel has also made several other statements. For example, along with the **German President Christian Wulff**, she stated it is a fact that Islam has already become part of Germany and added that **Germans should get used to the fact that mosques are part of the look of their cities**, and so on.[2]

Tony Blair's Labor government, which came to power in 1997, declared multiculturalism as a national task. Though in 2011, At a security conference in Munich the new UK Prime Minister**, David Cameron**, stated that '**state multiculturalism has failed'** and it has turned into another utopia. He further commented that "We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values," basically He said that under the "doctrine of state multiculturalism", different cultures have been encouraged to live separate lives, thus "frankly, we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years". [3]

French President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2009 is asking the nation "to consider what being French actually means" and launched the nationwide debate on French Identity.

Nicolas Sarkozy shared the position of David Cameron and Angela Merkel on the collapse of multiculturalism saying that "multiculturalism had left western democracies vulnerable to Islamist militants and that French identity was being erased".[4]

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1 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/17/emmanuel-macron-europe-civil-war-illiberalism-nationalism

2 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11559451

3 https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-12371994

4 https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-politics-sarkozy-idUSKCN0YU2K3

The radicalization of modern human consciousness is not just a European phenomenon. The same process is going on in the US and Russian society. It is in the context of radicalization that we can consider attempts to revise Kemalist policies in Turkey as well as Eurosceptic sentiments in the West (Britain, Poland, Hungary, Austria, etc.). Georgian society is also radicalized which (the society) only 30 years ago began to return to history and become a full-fledged subject of history. The dramatic (and even traumatic) nature of Georgian consciousness is the best ground for the radicalization of consciousness. We experience childish resentment towards the world and try to live in an idealized and mythologized past (the 'temporary vector') which is a simulacrum, chimera.

Radicalism is an indicator of both the immaturity of society and the crisis in society. We cannot blame the radicalization of consciousness on the immaturity of society in the 'traditional' West. This is a more accurate characteristic for societies that 'goes back to history' after a totalitarian or colonial past. The radicalization of consciousness in the West is the result of a crisis posed by the problem of intercultural communication (the difficulty of successful, full-fledged communication between cultures that have different value systems and principles).[5]

The new and dramatic process of identity search in the modern world is taking place against the background of neo-modernist (post-modernist) tendencies in international relations which, naturally, has a great impact on the domestic politics of countries. The characteristics of neo-modernist tendencies are:
Nationalism - concentrating on the specific national interests of one's own country and transactionalism (sharp pragmatism in foreign relations).

Holism - promoting concepts such as national security, ethnocultural

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5 **George Masalkini. "On Some Aspects of the Radicalization of Modern Consciousness,"** Anthology of Scientific Studies. Section on Psychology. Batumi, BSRSU. 2019, Volume 1, Number 1, pp.61-68.

identity and the sovereignty of the country instead of concentrating on economics and economic issues.

[Historism](#) - the revival of forgotten great narratives, creating a new mythology ...

Such rather difficult international conditions and the modern international context oblige Georgia to intensify its efforts in the field of the country's development.

Gia Nodia, one of the leading scholars on nationalism in Georgia, says that countries that have been hostile for centuries cannot even imagine a war with each other in today's Europe. But does this mean that a post-ethnic Europe also has been achieved? That – for the European people - a new historical unity was created? In his opinion, nothing like that has happened. A 'European Demos' could not be created and no one can see it. Europe, as the European Union, is a large political-bureaucratic framework in which European nations still enter with their national-state institutions, languages, collective memories, identities and this is compounded by the fact that the rather nationalist Baltic countries, the Romanians, the Hungarians, the Poles and the Slovaks joined EU institutions without any difficulty. Because of this, Estonian, Romanian or Slovak identities are not in any danger and, on the contrary, their nationalism becomes even more legitimate and solid after their inclusion in the EU. On the other hand, in ancient and traditional Europe - France, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Great Britain - nationalism represents a growing political force and not a decreasing one.[6]

Is there even a European model today, a European way of living as a standard or as a role model? **Or was Mahatma Gandhi right when he was asked how he would describe Western civilization and he replied: "Western civilization would be a wonderful thing if it existed!"**

Is European identity a single, homogeneous context or is it a unity of

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6 Gia Nodia. "European Nature of Georgian Identity Between Exclamation Marks and Question Marks." https://burusi.wordpress.com/2010/09/16/ghia-nodia/

different contexts that change in space and time? Or how will Brexit, for example, affect European identity? How does our society understand European dynamics?

Europe is, first and foremost, a certain normative model and a system of certain values which also presup-poses the existence of a civil nation and a social solidarity.

At the same time, we are all witnessing that the issue of identity remains a major, difficult and complex problem in modern Europe.

Let us continue reading and try to figure out the situation in Georgia in this regard.

COMPLEXITY AND TOPICALITY OF THE CHALLENGES OF NATIONHOOD: THE EXAMPLE OF GEORGIA

There are at least two circumstances that contribute to the complexity and topicality of the issue of nationhood in Georgia.

The first circumstance: Georgia - because of its confessional diversity - can be compared to penovani (layered) khachapuri (Georgian national dish, also called cheese-bread). It is one of the most multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries in the world. Because of this diversity, there are risks of different types of segregation. We have a very sad experience in this regard. These risks push us to pursue national policies rationally. Gia Nodia rightly points out: "Although Georgia as a state continues, the Georgian political tradition that the majority of the population is Georgian and certain attributes of statehood are Georgian (state language, anthem, etc.), any program document adopted on behalf of the state should be multiethnic. It should express the interests of the whole population and not only those of ethnic Georgians. Everyone who uses the words and concepts of 'nation,' 'national interests,' and 'national ideology,' etc., should ask themselves what they mean: they refer to ethnic Georgians or the entire population of Georgia (according to the people of Georgia)."[7]

In the West, the individual is a full-fledged political entity and a citizen and for this he does not need to belong to any group - be it ethnos, clan, denomination or anything else. It was considered that Europe has already managed to establish a civic identity in which an individual is above all. Europe has reached the stage where there is an organic fusion of traditional and modern, universal and individual, an organic union of human rights and traditionalism.

7 Gia Nodia. "The Ghost Prowls in Georgia, the Ghost of National Ideology."

The second circumstance: Georgian people possess an ancient culture, represent a new nation and as a state it is a young entity (I use the term 'nation' with an identical meaning as in English –nation, Russian - нация). Many problems are caused because of the 'adolescence of statehood.' The country, which had limited sovereignty for almost 800 years and had lost its independence for almost 200 years, began state-building just 30 years ago. However, in countries like ours, the state and its institutions play a big role in the transformation from ethnic to civic rationalism. For the construction of the state, it became necessary to acquire-restore-produce all of the necessary attributes, features and characteristics of statehood, starting with the demarcation of the state border and substantiating its configuration and ending with the creation of a new national historical narrative which would help in arising a new understanding of the polyethnic and polyconfessional state. Solving these difficult tasks did not turn out to be easy. By the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, radical ethnic nationalism led to the territorial and political disintegration of the country. We need to analyze these processes because in addition to the need to resolve the well-known conflicts, the country still faces the task of creating a unified national body. Part of the analysis of the process is to determine the ethnic and civic dimension of the nation and the nature of ethnic and civic nationalism and answer the question - Is ethnic nationalism being transformed into civic nationalism in the country and what incentives and impediments are influencing this process?[8]

Has such a civic nationalism project been established in Georgia which would replace the chauvinism encouraged by ethno-nationalism, the fear of "others" and xenophobia? Is there a strengthening of the

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www.nplg.gov.ge/gsdl/cgi-bin/library

8 Irakli Chkheidze. "From Ethnic to Civic Nationalism: The Dynamics of a National Project in Post-Soviet Georgia." 2016. http://press.tsu.ge/data/image_db_innova/Disertaciebi/irakli_chxaidze.pdf

ultra-right ideology and the radicalization of consciousness in Georgia as in the rest of the world? Did the coronavirus-induced situation affect the activation of xenophobic attitudes (how was this trend reflected in social media)? What role does the modern Georgian Orthodox Church play in inciting intolerance, cultivating hatred of others and encouraging violence?

It seems quite legitimate to think that radical groups are often run by the government, even to represent themselves "progressively" and to achieve various political goals.[9]

There are three main ways of understanding the essence of a 'nation:'

1. **The 'nation' is a relatively new, modern phenomenon and it has, first of all, a political connotation – the nation as a state.**
2. **The opposite view is that the concept of the 'nation' is relatively 'old.'**
3. **In daily life, the term 'nation' almost always refers to (and is associated with) ethnic entity.**

Which of these three approaches dominates in Georgian scientific and academic circles as well as in the mass representations of society? Giorgi Macharashvili accurately describes the position of the supporters of the nation as an old concept. He writes: "In some modern works, we find such an approach: the idea of the Georgian nation originated in the 1960s. From this time, the Georgian nation is being formed. At this instance, a multi-ethnic Georgian nation is being born ... We cannot agree with the abovementioned opinions because we believe that the idea of the Georgian nation originated much earlier than in modern times. Historical sources approve that in the Middle Ages, even when there was no unified Georgian state, the inhabitants of different parts of Georgia (Abkhazia, Kakheti, Svaneti, Trialeti, Klarjeti ...) had a unified national self-consciousness. They considered themselves Georgians and created a common Georgian culture. Thus, we consider it wrong to date the idea of the Georgian nation to modern times. Hence, although

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9 Salome Asatiani. (May 25, 2018). https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/

the introduction of the modern Western theories of nationalism into Georgian scientific circulation is indeed welcome, we believe that Georgian authors often misrepresent these theories vis-à-vis the Georgian historical reality. They do not present an objective study of the sources. The ideas presented in their works frequently lack proper scientific substantiation and leave the impression that they are dictated by the political conjuncture."[10]

For Georgia, as a particularly multi-ethnic country, a proper understanding of the nation's existence and a policy of correct and effective "assembly" based on it is directly related to the stability and security of the state. We have to define what kind of state we aim to build - **national (ethnic) or civil.** To do this, Georgian society must realize that building a uniquely ethnic basis for Georgian nationalism runs counter to building an institutional and democratic future for a polyethnic Georgia.

Georgian society is ethnically and religiously heterogeneous. We should ask about the extent to which its unity is being achieved? What type of unity is desired? What does 'being Georgian' mean? Does it mean having 'Georgian blood?' Does it mean speaking Georgian? Being an authentic part of Georgian consciousness and culture? Being Orthodox? Which sign defines 'being Georgian?'

In 1999 in Strasbourg, Zurab Zhvania said: "I am Georgian, therefore I am European." It was a politician's 'soundbite,' a short and memorable phrase that imprinted an important idea, a "message" in people's minds. But whose pathos was this? A specific political group's or of a majority of Georgian society? Youth? Civil society? The non-governmental sector? Are all 'I'-s Georgians? Are all 'I'-s Europeans? [11]

If being Georgian is defined by genetics, then what should we do

10 Giorgi Macharashvili. "Studies of Ethnicity and Nationalism in Modern Georgia" (Critical Review). Theses. https://www.academia.edu/14455330/

11 Gia Nodia. "European Nature of Georgian Identity Between Exclamation Marks and Question Marks," p. 1. https://burusi.wordpress.com/2010/09/16/ghia-nodia/

with the Abo Tbileli phenomenon? Religion? Yes, David Aghmashenebeli (David the Builder) did not address his army before the Didgori battle as 'Georgians.' He united people of different nationalities. He gathered them in front of him with the words – 'Warriors of Christ.' Nevertheless, today our self-identification cannot be achieved solely through the religious aspect. What should we do with Adjara, with Georgian Muslims, or Jews, Gregorians, or people who do not believe in god at all? At first glance, the definition of 'Georgian' according to cultural affiliation seems to be the most correct. But think about it - who are the cinematic and animated characters today? Does Georgian culture today have the unifying power and energy for the country?[12]

Perhaps in order to answer this question we need to understand that the nation, its identity and uniqueness is a European idea and it represents the values which should be cherished and on which the legitimacy of a political entity is based. I am talking about the idea of a nation-state. This idea came to Georgia from Europe (initially - through Russia) and its importers are the people with whom the modern idea of 'Georgianness' is associated (which I will discuss more below). If there were not this European idea, the *Georgian nation* would not have existed - that is, the idea of 'holding ourselves to ourselves' would not have existed and Georgian statehood would not have grown after this idea, writes Gia Nodia. ... We would have been left with khachapuri and satsivi (Georgian national food), Georgian dance and song and we would call it 'Georgianness.' Probably, we would keep a toast about our siblings with us for some time as well. But - he asks the legitimate question - would the representatives of different regions and ethnic minorities consider themselves to be one race, one entity?[13]

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12 Zura Makharadze. "In Search of a New National Narrative," p. 1. (02.03.2016). http://european.ge/zura-makharadze-axali-erovnuli-narativi/

13 Gia Nodia. "European Nature of Georgian Identity Between Exclamation Marks and Question Marks." www.nplg.gov.ge/gsdl/cgi-bin/library

DEFINITIONS OF THE TERM "NATION."
ATTEMPTS AT CLASSIFICATION

There are two main different ways of understanding the term 'nation.' One group of scholars identifies a nation with a particular ethnic group which excludes the presence of another ethnic group as a member of that nation. This is the idea and position of **ethnic nationalism**.

The beheading of the king as a result of the French Revolution had a great symbolic significance. It is in the place of the cut head that the nation takes its place. Introducing new rules before which all must be equal, there is no longer a dynasty, no hierarchy, no more the privileges of the aristocracy.

The other group of scholars believes that the nation is based on the idea of citizenship and a common value system. Consequently, anyone who shares this idea and this system of values (most of the values) can become a member of this nation (regardless of ethnicity). In this view, the nation is an inclusive phenomenon.

This is the idea and position of civic nationalism.

As I have already mentioned above, a solid part of the academic circles in our country and, in my opinion, the vast majority of society share the idea of **ethnic nationalism**. To them, a nation is a biological, genetic category and it has existed for a long time.

To demonstrate the opposite view, let us cite Zaza Shatirishvili's position which coincides with the views of scholars of the modernist and ethnosymbolist position (Benedict Anderson, Anthony Smith, Ernest Gellner, Ernest Renan, etc.). ***Nationalism in Georgia - Zaza Shatirishvili believes - was born in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and then it was spread***. Georgian nationalism is not a continuation of the medieval Georgian kingdom. Nation means egalitarianism and equality

while what was before the nation - the kingdom - is fundamentally different. It is hierarchical and has a completely different rule of legitimacy. Zaza Shatirishvili shares this opinion and I completely agree: The main goal of nationalism everywhere and always was to create a nation-state and it was after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars that the process of dismantling empires and traditional states and creating a nation-state began, finally ending in 1918 when traditional empires disappeared and **nation-states** were established. Christianity, which in the Middle Ages was the symbol of *religion as an identity*, does not approve narrow ethnic nationalism. Nationalism is a completely unacceptable doctrine for Christianity. The whole activity of St. Paul the Apostle was devoted to spreading Christianity outside of Israel. Ethnic nationalism is precisely the legacy of the bourgeois French Revolution. It was after the French Revolution that people began to be judged on their own ethnicity and established ethnolinguistic republics. Nazism was also one ugly manifestation of this modern liberalism. Nukri Shoshiashvili conditionally divides the states into two parts:

traditional and national states. With rare exceptions, the traditional state is always polyethnic, it has dominant and peripheral ethnoses and the main controversy in such types of countries is on a religious basis. The pinnacle of the traditional state is the empire. Until the nineteenth century, in particular until 1806, the term "empire" did not mean the conquest of one state by another. The empire was a nation-state that expressed the universal political order of the world and its model was the Roman Empire. In a traditional society, people had clear ideas about their own identities and they did not need to create imaginary ones.

Merab Mamardashvili noted that the goal of all ideologies is to create one type of person - a "good citizen," a "good communist," a "good fascist" and so on.

Irakli Chkheidze sees important difference between a traditional

14 Zaza Shatirishvili. Hot Chocolate, January 1, 2008.

state and a nation-state in that nation and the state become synonyms. In a traditional state, the ideas of state and nation (ethnos) are partially or not at all identical concepts. A nation-state, if it is truly national, is trying to create a single political identity and so every nation-state is pursuing an assimilation policy that cannot be formed without the assimilation and the destruction of ethnic identity...[15]

Giga Zedania believes that the division into ethnic and civil nations is neither accurate nor problem-free. In his view, the position of the German author, Friedrich Maineke, who distinguishes between nation-states and cultural nations, is more productive. If nationalism in Georgia was formed within the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, then it is understandable why language, culture and religion have become the defining factors of identity. It was difficult to put forward a political factor in this situation. The institution of civil nationalism is already a state. According to Giga Zedania, the introduction of this ideology started in 2003. It turned out that civic nationalism was also problematic. While ethnic nationalism excludes other nations from the ranks of the "titular nation," civic nationalism requires the integration of minorities, including cultural ones. It fails to satisfy only the political dimension of identity and introduces a cultural factor. This is close to the policy of assimilation.

Any nationalism is cultural but in the process of nation-state formation, it acquires a political dimension and the notions of ethnic and civic nationalism emerge.

Ethnic nationalism is cultural nationalism.

Civic nationalism is state nationalism.

<u>The stronger the state institutions, the stronger the state (civic) nationalism.</u>

The strength of the state is manifested in a great deal of confidence in the political institutions of the country. According to Giga Zedania, there is a good criterion to compare the strength of the positions of

15 Nukri Shoshiashvili. "Traditional State and Nation State." (26.04.2016). http://european.ge/nukri-shoshiashvili-tradiciuli-da-nacionaluri-saxelmwifo/

ethnic and civic nationalism: conducting research and determining the percentage of the population which is proud of the country's political institutions and the percentage which is proud of the country's national traditions...

As for the strengthening the positions of civil nationalism, I would like to agree with Giga Zedania that the strengthening of the state alone will not lead to a modern society. The state institutions themselves cannot generate the values on which democratic development must be based. A strong civil society is also crucial.[16]

Like Giga Zedania, Gia Nodia believes that the dichotomy of ethnic-civic nationalism is more or less conditional. A nation is not a group of people united by any rational principles. The nation is united, on the one hand, by the **ethnic basis** (language, culture, beliefs of common origin) and, on the other hand, by **the will** to create and maintain a common political organization (state). In his view, it is impossible to expect construction of an ethnic basis on fully rational principles. The will to create and maintain a political organization (state) is usually expressed in the constitution. No other rational construction can have the function of representing the nation as a whole. Any other "national ideology" would be an attempt by a political party or intellectual movement to usurp a common space of thought.[17]

There are also the two following approaches to understanding a nation's identity:

1. **Nations that arose directly as a result of the process of modernization, so to speak, naturally**.
2. **Nations that arose on the basis of the adoption of the idea of a nation and the policy of nationalism.**

16 Giga Zedania. "Between Two Nations? The Issue of National Identity in Georgia." (16.09.2010). https://burusi.wordpress.com/2010/09/16/giga-zeda-nia-9/

17 Gia Nodia. "The Ghost Prowls in Georgia, the Ghost of National Ideology." www.nplg.gov.ge/gsdl/cgi-bin/library

In this approach, importance is given to the idea of the nation or the narrative of the national identity that the cultural and political elite of the nation forms and, for this purpose, constructs the past, so to say (the selection of facts, the interpretation of the facts, reinterpretation, etc.).

Merab Mamardashvili wrote on the interpretations: ***"The past is the most awful thing we have and what should we do with it? This is the biggest problem."***[18]

The reason for this is that the past becomes very unpredictable... The past is a surprisingly flexible and submissive phenomenon, it easily becomes a source of illusions and pseudo-abstractions and it is easily manipulated by modern society which is desperate because of the present, writes Pirishvili.[19]

The formation of a nation based on the national idea is aimed at creating a mythological narrative of history (heroic, romanticized, nostalgic). This is the phenomenon of a path dependency where the concept of the past creates the concepts of the present and the future. George Orwell believed that he who controls the past controls the future but the past is controlled by the present...

Like the rest of the world, Georgia is experiencing a crisis of self-identification. There are no clear answers to the following questions: what does the Georgian nation, the Georgian people and Georgian itself mean? Is the cultural and political elite of Georgia ready to produce and implement the idea of a modern state? The educational system and the media are used to create the concept of identity when the relevant ideology becomes a universal product that is taught at school and shared on television. How productive is the country's political and cultural elite in this regard?

The Georgian nation is a product of the modern era, the result of Georgian nationalism (nineteenth century). At the same time, it has

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18 http://www.mamardashvili.ru/czitaty.html

19 Zaza Piralishvili. "Returning to the History of the People and the Fate of Liberalism." Wisdom from Cries of Woe (Gia Chumburidze, Editor), Tbilisi, 1994.

deep ethnic roots. From the second half of the nineteenth century, the Georgian cultural elite began to care about ethnocultural self-identification in which Ilia Chavchavadze and the *Iveria* magazine (1877-1906) played a major role. The task was to put Georgian unity on the rails of civic nationalism and conceptualize this unity. In the next section, we will discuss the positions of Ilia Chavchavadze, the main creator of this conceptualization and the creator of a practically new Georgian historical narrative. We will also discuss the importance of the historical and political context in the formation of the national project.

ILIA CHAVCHAVADZE - CIVIC OR ETHNIC UNDERSTANDING OF A NATION? THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

How does Ilia Chavchavadze define the Georgian nation: civic or ethnic?

On the one hand, he saw the nation from the nationalism perspective and discussed it as a political unity and, on the other hand, he saw it from the perspective of ethnic nationalism, seeing the nation as an inseparable whole, a living organism with its spirit and morals, and so in this regard being Georgian is only possible by birth. His position was largely determined by the political and cultural context.[20] Ilia Chavchavadze shared the vision of Ernest Renan which was widely published by the Iveria publishing house. Ernest Renan attached special importance to collective memory for the origin of the nation. The basis of a nation being united, according to Ernest Renan, is the mnemonic activity of the collective: forgetting what hinders unity and remembering all that promotes unity (shared joy and victory as well as sorrow and defeat). Ernest Renans saw the nation as a political and, at the same time, moral unity. The nation is a "French" idea for him. While most nationalists defined the nation by objectivist categories, Renan declared the nation to be a union created by the will of individuals (1882).

Here is an excerpt from Ilia Chavchavadze's letter, "Ottoman Georgia:" "Every nation is inspired by its history. History represents the treasure that helps nation find the strength of its soul, the euphony of its soul, the moral and mental superiority of its own, the identity of itself, the traits and characteristics of its own. In our opinion, neither the unity of language nor the unity of faiths and tribe will ever unitemen with

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20 Mariam Chkhartishvili. "The Idea of the Georgian Nation About the Phenomenon of the Nation and the European Discourse." https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324361417

each other as the unity of history."[21] The task faced by Ilia Chavchavadze required not only the correction of Georgian cultural memory but, in fact, it required its recreation as well. He tried to solve this task by conceptualizing the word 'homeland.' Georgian national discourse is based on the concept of 'homeland.' Through it, specific geography acquires a symbolic meaning which ultimately shapes cultural identification. Cultural memory is defined by the modern theorist Ian Asman as follows: "The composition of texts, icons and customs that are reusable for every society and epoch is (at best, but not necessarily) a collectively shared knowledge of the past based on an awareness of the unity and diversity of a certain group of people." It must be said that a kind of duality of Ilia Chavchavadze's national project conditioned the openness of his position, both for ideological interpretations and for its appropriation by this or that ideology.[22]

As we have already found out, the idea of a nation is formed by nationalism, a national ideology with various classifications, but the most common are the ethnic (exclusive) and the civic (inclusive) understandings of nationalism. Some scholars see nationalism as an artificial project and its function and content is driven by the goals of the dominant political elite. If its purpose is to incite ethnic nationalism, then in the foreground come such characteristics of the nation as common descent, autochthony, blood kinship and so on. If the goal of the dominant political elite is to form a multiethnic society and establish a civic identity, then characteristics such as citizenship, loyalty to the state and other elements dependent on free will and free choice become a priority.[23] The visions and goals of the political power (elite) and, consequently, the identity of the project of nationalism are greatly influenced by the specific historical context, the dynamics of events and the political

21 Ilia Chavchavadze. "Ottoman Georgia," p. 1. https://library.iliauni.edu.ge/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/iliatchavtchavadze-osmalossagarthvelo.pdf

22 Giorgi Maisuradze. "Homeland' and 'Mother of Georgia.'" (24/03/2011). https://burusi.wordpress.com/2011/03/24/giorgi-maisuradze-8/

23 Irakli Chkheidze. Ibid.

conjuncture, etc. The years before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union can be considered as such a historically dynamic period when the most difficult task of creating an independent state contributed to the radicalization of public sentiments and the formation of ethnic nationalism. Ernest Gellner believed that the project and the idea of a nation is a coincidence that is formed at the appropriate time and circumstance. It is such a coincidence, a combination of objective and subjective factors, that determined the peculiarities of Georgian nationalism.[24]

After gaining independence, it turned out that the political and cultural elite did not properly realize and, consequently, could not agree on the identity upon which we should build the future Georgian project:

1. Georgian = 'therefore European' (European, civic narrative).
2. Georgian = Orthodox (Orthodox narrative).
3. Georgian is someone who is Georgian by blood (ethnic narrative).

According to Nukri Shoshiashvili, these three main narratives, which coexisted and still coexist today, are the result and manifestation of the Post-colonial Syndrome. The basis of all three of them must be sought in the desire to free oneself from the colonial past. First, all three of these narratives have to do with something. All three appeal to save the country such as, for example:

1. The European narrative is built entirely on the Russian factor. Our choice is Europe as much as our choice is not Russia, Russian culture, etc.
2. The Orthodox narrative is aimed at protecting the Georgian faith and spirituality from external influences, depravity, etc.
3. The ethnic narrative treats different ethnic minorities as projects of different empires against Georgia and a priori presents them as the greatest threat.

All three of these narratives speak from a position of a certain 'historical justice' but the underlying basis for these narratives is that

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24 Ibid.

we are dealing with a clear historical dissatisfaction because of which we try to overcome our history and rewrite it.[25]

Merab Mamardashvili writes about Georgian mentality: "The fact that we never grow up is simply a problem of growth. This problem is manifested depending on whether we are angry with the world or not. The world of a child is like that. The child perceives the world in his own way: the world either makes him feel good or it makes him angry. What are (Georgian) adults like? Look around and observe the community. It is full of, so to speak, adults crammed into childhood. They perceive themselves at the center of the universe and they think that everything in the universe is happening against them and not within themselves. In what is maturity manifested? An English philosopher once said: 'You are an adult when you know the world has no intentions towards you.' It is already an adult perception."[26]

Here, I will continue following the opinion of Nukri Shoshiashvili. He quotes the XI grade history textbook published in 1998, entitled *History of XIX-XX Centuries*, which is the history of the struggle of the Georgian people against the Russian Empire. In the textbook of the same grade published in 1987, it was written that "the history of the Georgian people of the XIX century is the history of the class struggle." A little later, in 2005, one of the goals of the same history textbook was to write: "The goal of studying history is to instill liberal values in adolescents."

The reason for the constant change of narratives, in his view, is usually explained by the change of elites who are the creators and agents of different narratives.[27]

25 Nukri Shoshiashvili. "False Identities and Narratives." http://european.ge/nukri-shoshiashvili-yalbi-identobebi-da-narativebi/

26 Merab Mamardashvili. "Childhood and Adulthood." (29/05/2009). https://burusi.wordpress.com/2009/05/29/merab-mamardashvili-4/

27 Nukri Shoshiashvili. Ibid.

MODERN THEORIES OF NATIONALISM.
CLASSIC TEXTS

Modern theories of nationalism can be divided into three groups (this is the classification of theories about nationalism offered by Anthony Smith):

The first group: primordialist and sociobiological theories according to which national identity is a given a definition from time immemorial. Primordial identity is based on the feelings and emotions that accompany an individual from birth. We can call such an approach "Gheleghurdan nationalism."

Goethe writes: "Each man is born in his own people and belongs to their soul. Each individual, as far as he is spiritually connected to his people from the moment of birth, acquires faith from the faith of his fathers without any guilt or merit."[28]

Even though the primordial theory does not fall into the mainstream of modern nationalist theories, I would say that it retains its viability and may even undergo some revival, especially in the light of current events in the West and around the world.

The second group: instrumentalist theories - nationality and ethnicity are the result of political, economic and social processes. Individuals have some freedom which means that they can belong to the desired nation. They are not bound to any one particular unity, they can change their national identity or be members of more than one unity.

In the primordial, ethnic conception of the nation, the individual lacks this ability.

The third group: modernist theories that can be considered as **mainstream theories**. One of these theories is called the **ethnosymbolistic theory**. According to these theories, both nations and nationalism are modern phenomena.

The theories of the second and the third groups can be called

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28 Век XX и мир. Москва, 4/90. p. 46.

constructivist theories as a whole. The emergence of a nation is ultimately ensured by the elites and they construct the nation as a phenomenon.

In his work, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of Its Origins and Foundations* (1944), Hans Cohn writes that in the West, nationalism was based on the idea that the nation is a rational association of citizens with common laws and territories. Non-Western nationalism, in his view, promotes a common culture and ethnicity when the nation is seen as an indestructible, organic, higher-order organism that accompanies us from the moment of birth and has a huge influence on us.

For Anthony Smith, such a division is conditional. He brings the example of civic nationalism in France where citizenship meant learning the French language, doing business in the French language, studying French history and French literature, preserving French traditions and recognizing French symbols and institutions. Remarkable in this regard are the words uttered by someone called Clermonton at the French Assembly in 1790: "To the Jew as an individual, we give everything, to the Jew as a Jew - nothing." It is only in America where we see attempts (trends) to establish a true multicultural society after the 1960s.[29]

Yet, it is hard not to see that the **spirit and lifestyle of American society originated on the basis of Protestant England**. The fact that the Americans had only one Catholic president, John F. Kennedy (and he was assassinated), deserves a special emphasis here. Despite its conditionality, dichotomy - ethnic and civic nationalism - retains its validity.

Let us briefly review the classical theories of nationalism. Recognized representatives of this field - Ernest Renan, Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith and Eric Hobsbawm - describe the events of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries (the era of the formation of nations and nationalism) in their works.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a new and, as it turned out, paradigmatic definition of the nation belonged to Ernest Renan.

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29 Irakli Chkheidze. Ibid.

For him, a nation is a mental being... Race, language, public interest, religion and geography are enough to create it... A nation is a soul, a mental being composed of the past and the present. It is a consent, the desire to live together and strengthen the country. It is a common will in the present.

Benedict Anderson and his famous work, *Imaginary Societies: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, laid the foundation for the modernist concept of nationalism. The nation is a new phenomenon that begins to take shape in Europe after the Great French Revolution. A nation is an imaginary political society. We do not know most of the representatives of our nation; however, we perceive them as one. Nationalism lays the groundwork for political goals and movements. It is necessary to have a nationalist elite, mainly young people, who have been educated abroad. Benedict Anderson calls them pilgrims. In his view, this is how nationalism flourished in the empires. Here, a lot of Georgians will remember the "*Tergdaleulebi*" and the "National Project" formed by them. This project presented a completely new vision, a concept according to which a national identity should become the main source of loyalty and it should become stronger than religious, regional or other identities.[30]

Another contemporary scholar of nationalism, Miroslav Hroch, who argued that nationalism in the imperial space would go through the following stages, evokes associations with the *Tergdaleulebi* as well :

1. Striving for the establishment of a cultural identity - language reform, creation of a national history, a new national narrative and strengthening its role.
2. Delivering the project created by the elite to the people through educational institutions, schools and the press.
3. Absolute mobilization of society.

The work of the *Tergdaleulebi* went through exactly the same stages.[31]

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30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

Ernest Gellner, in his famous work, *Nations and Nationalism*, emphasizes the importance of culture in the formation of nationalism. He connects the origin of nationalism with the industrial (postgraduate) period. According to one of his main views, **national and political borders should coincide**. The goal of nationalism is to create a sovereign political entity. According to Gellner, having nationality is not an inherent attribute of humanity, it only now seems so. Nations, like states, are products of randomness and not a universal necessity. Nations have not always existed, nor have the states. We can assume that human consciousness has remained unchanged for a long time, for many millennia, and it has not become better or worse in the relatively short new era of nationalism. According to Ernest Gellner, there are two conditional definitions of a nation, **cultural and voluntaristic**. According to the cultural definition, two people represent one nation only when they both represent the same culture (he views culture as a system of ideas, signs, associations, rules of conduct and systems of communications).

According to voluntarist nationalism, two people represent the same nation only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words: the nation created man. Nations are products of human faith, loyalty and solidarity. The population of a given territory or a group of people speaking a given language becomes a nation if the members of that category firmly recognize certain mutual rights and responsibilities towards each other based on their common membership. It is the recognition of each other as followers of one thing that makes them a nation and not other common attributes (whatever they might be).

Nationalism is not an awakening of old, latent, dormant forces, even though it represents itself as such. In fact, it is the result of a new form of social organization based on a well-thought-out culture that is highly dependent on education and is protected by its own state. Nationalism uses some pre-existing cultures and gradually goes through transformation in the process of application.

Nationalism sees itself as the one which (by its nature) is in charge of keeping the order of mankind's political life. Hegel describes this vision as follows: *Nations had a long history before they finally found their destiny - to transform themselves into states.* This pre-state period is actually "prehistoric." For Hegel, the true history of nations begins only with their attainment of statehood.

Nationalism is not a mythical, naturally awakened and established entity. Rather, it is the formation of new units corresponding to the conditions prevailing in our time and as a material it uses cultural, historical or other remnants of the pre-nationalist world. New social conditions require a standardized, homogeneous, centrally protected high culture that encompasses the whole society and not just the elite minority. A situation is created in which well-defined and united cultures are the only type of culture with which people identify with great diligence. Then there occurs the need for the political legitimacy of these cultures. People want to unite politically only with those who share their culture.

Consequently, politics expands its boundaries to the framework of its culture in order to protect itself and re-emerge its culture. The union of will, culture and politics becomes the norm. These conditions are not typical for the whole history of mankind but only for its industrial period. **Only nationalism gives birth to nations and not conversely nations – to nationalism.** Naturally, nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically transmitted forms of culture, albeit selectively, and at the same time it often transforms it radically.[32]

Anthony Smith's book, **_"Nationalism, Ideology, History,"_** is mainly a summary work. Therein, he devotes a great deal of space to the analysis of the role and perspectives of the nation-state. For him, first and foremost, nationalism is an ideology and a social movement characterized by a special symbolic language and rhetoric. Anthony Smith was the first person who distinguished civil and ethnic nations

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32 Ernest Gellner. Nations and Nationalism. Nekeri Publishing House. 2003.

and nationalism. He shared the view of nationalism as a modern phenomenon and, at the same time, he argued that all nations have a predominant "ethnic core" and a "prehistory."

In his book, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Program, Myth, Reality,* **Eric Hobsbawm** cites the Stalinist definition of the Nation (1912) and, consequently, the only permissible definition in the Soviet Union for decades: *A nation is a historically formed stable unity with a common language, territory, economic life and psychology which is manifested in cultural unity.* Eric Hobsbawm notes that this is an objective concept of the nation. There is another ***voluntarist concept*** of the nation which has two versions: ***the collective concept*** that manifests itself in Ernest Renan's famous definition of the "nation as a daily plebiscite." And a subjective***, individual concept*** - when a person demands (chooses) this or that nationality.

The voluntarist concept, in his point of view, is an escape from the dictatorship of objective criteria. But this concept is built only on the criterion of will (consciousness and personal choice); therefore, neither voluntaristic (subjective) nor objective definitions are satisfactory. Therefore, for Eric Hobsbawm, an agnostic position is the most acceptable. Hobsbawm shares Ernest Gellner's view that "*nationalism is, first and foremost, a principle that requires the coincidence of political and national unity*" which imposes a commitment on its inhabitants to the unity that makes them a nation. A nation is not an ancient and unchanging social unity. It was created in a specific period of modern history. Like Ernest Gellner, Hobsbawm also emphasizes the element of artificiality, invention and social engineering in the creation of nations. Let us again recall Ernest Renan for whom historical oblivion, even the confusion of events, plays an important role in the creation of a nation and, therefore, advancement in historical research is often a threat to the nation.

Eric Hobsbawm agrees that the birth of the nation's political idea was prompted by the French Revolution in 1789. The nation, as God-

given, as inviolable - is a myth. The reality is that nationalism, which transforms pre-existing cultures into nations, sometimes reinvents them as well. A nation is the result of a nation-state and nationalism.[33] In the next section, we will talk about the echo and the impact of this and some other theories on the discourse of nationalism in Georgia.

33 Eric Hobsbawm. "Nations and Nationalism Cince 1780. Program, Myth, Reality." Ilia State University, 2012.

THE INFLUENCE OF CLASSICAL AND OTHER THEORIES ON THE NATIONAL DISCOURSE IN GEORGIA. THE CONCEPT OF A "GREAT IDENTITY"

In previous chapters, we have seen that according to the modern classical theories of nationalism (Gellner, Smith, Anderson, Hobsbawm), the concept of the "nation" was formed in modern times. That the notion of the "nation" did not exist before and if there were such a thing, it was not the notion of the "nation" that we have today. According to these authors, the emergence of national consciousness around the world should be assumed from the nineteenth century. These theories, naturally, had a great impact on Georgian academic circles. Gigi Tevzadze notes that three authors started writing, talking and arguing about nationalism in modern Georgia: Zaliko Kikodze, Gia Nodia and Gigi Tevzadze himself. Gigi Tevzadze notes that the recognition of modern classical theories and their circulation in the Georgian space required answers to such completely legitimate questions:

- What kind of unity did "Kartlis Tskhovreba" create?
- Is the devotion of Georgians to the nation and religionhistorically confirmed?
- Were the Jews a nation before the New Age?

The following answers to these questions could be given: first, that religious sentiments dominated the Middle Ages. That is, what we thought of as national consciousness in the Middle Ages (in the case of Georgia) is in fact a religious consciousness that has historically had special features. The answer may also be that in the Middle Ages, we were dealing only with the rudiments of ethnic identity. As for the ancient Jews, their unity was based on a religious idea and not on a national one. But these answers, Gigi Tevzadze admits, do not sound very convincing.

It is in these circumstances that he introduces the term of a "great identity." A "great identity" is a system of ideas and perceptions about the world around us that is shared and perceived by a large group of people based on their own political, social and cultural activities, most of whose members do not know each other and probably never will. Typically, these perceptions create imaginary boundaries beyond which a person is perceived as a stranger. This imaginary border may or may not coincide with a geographical or a political border.

According to Gigi Tevzadze, we have every reason to believe that the "great identity" as a social and political phenomenon arose after it became possible for a long time to introduce a complex set of specific ideas and perceptions into large groups of people. After that, a unified education system and the mass media emerged. Only the mass media and education make it possible to render any system of ideas precious and irreplaceable for each citizen.

In other words, a "great identity" is an opportunity for a single system of ideas to become internal, necessary and defining of political and social action for the people of the whole country. "Great identities" are created and disseminated by governments or groups of influential people. This is not because the government or highly influential groups include particularly smart people, but because they have in their hands both the mechanisms necessary to create a great identity - the institutional forms of education and the mass media. However, it must be said that in most cases, the creation of a "great identity" is an unconscious and non-deliberate process.

In the Middle Ages, we can speak of a "great identity" in those cases where there was a unified and universal education system. But in the Middle Ages, such countries/societies were the exception. One such exception is probably China.

"Down with Confucius!" - A poster with such an inscription was brought by the Hunwejbin (young revolutionaries) in the 1970s at a demonstration during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The teachings of Confucius have been the basis of Chinese state-legal and educational

culture for centuries, promoting the phenomenon of a "great identity" (at least its many elements).

We can also say with almost certainty that the Jewish community was an agent of a "great identity" - precisely because of its unified and (almost) universal education.

Gigi Tevzadze notes that the Georgian national idea and Georgian consciousness has existed since the time when the Georgian state and the political statement of the elite of this state existed. But the national idea as a "**great identity**" became possible in Georgia only after the emergence of the media and formalized educational systems.[34]

Let us briefly review the position of some contemporary authors on these issues.

In the introductory part of the collection, *After Independence: Creating and Protecting the Nation in a Postcolonial and Post-Communist Society* (2006), **Lowell Barrington** sets out a new direction in the study of nationalism - the role and function of nationalism after the creation of a sovereign state. Ian Bremer writes in the article, "Post-Soviet Nations after Independence" (same collection), that in their search for independence, the national elites mobilized the masses around the nation, the homeland and the historical identity. Since gaining independence, new challenges, new goals and new rules of the game have emerged. One of the authors of the collection, Stephen Jones, a well-known researcher in the Caucasus region, believes that Georgian nationalism collapsed in the 1990s, resulting in a civil war using arms to overthrow the government, two ethno-political conflicts and lost territories.

Natalie Sabanadze, in her work *Globalization and Nationalism: The Cases of Georgia and the Basque Country*, distinguishes three phases of post-Soviet Georgian nationalism:

1. National fundamentalism and radicalism - the era of Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

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34 Gigi Tevzadze. "Great Identity." (16/09/2010). https://burusi.wordpress.com/2010/09/16/gigi-tevzadze-8/

2. National apathy and deradicalization - Eduard Shevardnadze's period.

3. The end of the 1990s and the period after the "Rose Revolution" - a strong civic discourse and, on the other hand - the formation of radical attitudes.

In her other work, *Ethnic Diversity of Georgia: A Challenge to State-Building* (2012), **Natalie Sabanadze** writes about ethnic institutionalization during the Soviet period. She analyzes a situation where, alongside with the idea of multiculturalism, ethnic nationalism and primordial approaches flourished in academic circles.

According to **Zurab Davitashvili** (*Nationalism and Globalization*, 2003), Georgia's failure in the 1990s was due to radical ethnic nationalism. This failure contributed to the emergence of a demand for civic nationalism and the care for the transition process. Political elites realized that maintaining and strengthening statehood required the transformation of ethnic nationalism into state nationalism.

Davit Aprasidze, in the article "Formation of the State and the Nation in Modern Georgia: An Unfinished Project?," from the collection, *Birth of the Georgian Nation*, notes that the question - In what geographical area was the state of Georgia formed and who constitutes the Georgian nation? – is still unanswered. In his opinion, the main challenge on the way to the formation of the Georgian political nation is to achieve the homogeneity of the unity of the people living on the territory of Georgia.

Irakli Chkheidze's doctoral thesis helped us a great deal in presenting this short review.[35] In the next section, we will discuss the reasons for the radicalization of modern Georgian nationalism.

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35 Irakli Ckheidze. Ibid.

THE PHENOMENON OF THE RADICALIZATION OF MODERN GEORGIAN NATIONALISM AND THE REASONS BEHIND

The radicalization of Georgian nationalism, which has been manifested since the 1980s, has cost the country dearly... The roots of this radicalization must be traced back to recent history, whether during being a part of the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union. This somewhat unified space was characterized by a policy of Russification. That is why the creators of the national idea, the national project, faced the task of mobilizing the people on ethnic grounds. Therefore, the Georgian National Project had a double burden - it contained both ethnic (exclusive) as well as civic (inclusive) elements (we have already discussed such a dual position with the main author of the Georgian National Project, Ilia Chavchavadze). This circumstance also played a role in the modern radicalization of Georgian nationalism.

Ilia Chavchavadze converted the idea of ethnic nationalism into a formula - "We are left with three treasures from our ancestors - **language, homeland and religion.**" But it was immediately clear to him that another kind of effort was needed to build on the already existing fundamental identity of "language, homeland and religion." This new type of effort was an attempt to build a state identity. The Western state format was built mainly on the three most important pillars **- education, economics and communications**. In Georgia, the *Tergdaleulebi* made every effort in all of these three directions:

1. The Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians was established**.**
2. A Western-type economic body - a local bank - was formed, thus determining the economic priority of the future, taking into account Georgia's scarce resources.
3. A communications network was established - the latest technological tool for providing information at that time – magazines and newspapers.

This effort of the *Tergdaleulebi* came across great difficulties, including cultural and mental ones. Zaza Piralishvili writes that Georgia is a place of the crossing and the gathering of many cultures - Asian, European, Christian, Muslim, traditional and post-cultural values gather here. But, first of all, in his opinion, Georgia is mainly a country of a conserved (and not a conservative) culture.

Cultural conservation has been one of the defense mechanisms against the historical cataclysms that the country has endured for centuries. Overcoming this conservative culture was and remains one of the necessary conditions for the transformation of ethnic nationalism into civic nationalism. In this regard, the process of globalization presents new opportunities for Georgia. It is given the chance to become the only transit cultural region at the crossroads of many cultures and become a real space for intercultural dialogue.

It should also be noted that such a global trend is turning our culture into a conflict mode. On the one hand, it is conserved and, on the other hand, it is transitory. This is a new reality in our culture. According to Zaza Piralishvili, there is nothing alarming about identity here as every culture works in such a conflict mode. According to him, the task is different: we need to rethink Georgia's "cultural strategies" and define a new strategic orientation for cultural policy.

We should highlight the role of Georgia as a medium and transit space between the North and South Caucasus, and the East and the West. In his opinion, it is impossible to reduce Georgian culture to one specific description. It (Georgian culture) is like a mosaic. ***He considers the urbanized subculture of Georgian culture in Tbilisi as a special phenomenon which is not only a representation of the mosaic of Georgian culture but, in its essence, it is the center of the Caucasus. It is the cultural space in which virtually every Caucasian culture and subculture transits.***[36]

36 L. Piralishvili-Iakobashvili. Letters on Georgian Identity: Theatrical Dialectics of Georgian Politics. (Z. Piralishvili, Editor). Tbilisi, 2007.

Apart from the duality of the Georgian National Project due to the historical-political context, naturally, there were other determinants of the radicalization of nationalism. Irakli Chkheidze notes that, especially in the last years of the Soviet Union, an ethnically monolithic political elite was formed which created a fertile ground for confrontation between ethnic groups. It was a kind of state "nationalism" that preferred ethnic Georgians. It is fair to say that the approach was similar in practically all Soviet republics. This was the case towards "titular" ethnoses as well as in autonomous republics. Here, the national motive and anti-communist ideology (with the brotherhood and equality of its peoples) intersected. Nihilism towards internationalist ideology (which was a manifestation of the weakening of Marxist ideology) led to the stirring up of national sentiments and the replacement of Marxism with nationalism. **Benedict Anderson** saw nationalism as an erosion of Marxism. The fluctuation and exhaustion of communist ideology led to the weakening and revision of the ideology of the "brotherhood of peoples." Benedict Anderson believed that nationalism was the main contributor to the collapse of the socialist system.

The emergence of radicalism was facilitated by the "Small Country Syndrome" and the fear of losing one's own culture, language and traditions. This syndrome and these fears were fueled by the neighborhood with large states as well as by the events of 1978 (when the protection of the Georgian language as an official language became necessary).[37] We can also talk about a typologically similar "orphan syndrome." Azerbaijanis belong to the great Turkish world. Armenians have the largest and most influential diaspora in the world. And we are all alone...

John Hutchinson draws a line between political and cultural nationalism. The goal of political nationalism is to create an independent state. The goal of cultural nationalism is to establish an ethnic society.

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37 Irakli Chkheidze. Ibid.

The formation of an ethnic society requires ethno-historical awakening and care for the mother tongue, literature, theatre, etc. According to this classification, we can call the nationalism of the *Tergdaleulebi* a "cultural nationalism."

According to John Hutchinson, Stephen Jones and others, in 1991 Georgian people were a cultural phenomenon and not a political or civic unity. Hence, there arose the cultivation of feelings of superiority and the extinction of folk traditions. The issues were mostly resolved in the streets which led to a special emotional background, a lack of rationalism, exaltation, theatricality, carnival and rally "logic," emotion, drama, performance - instead of pragmatism, dialogue and cooperation. From the same arsenal was the patriotic lyric, a collective reading of prayers, a shout of "Vivat!"

Signs of exclusive nationalism existed in most of the multi-ethnic countries of the time and Georgia was no exception. National minorities, in general, and their political and cultural elites with separatist attitudes have reacted negatively to Georgian ethnic nationalism. Radicalism has also increased on their part. Abkhazian "*Aidgilara*," Ossetian "*Adamon Nikhas*," Armenian "*Krunk*" and "*Javakh*" and Azerbaijani "*Geirati*" were created.

The vocabulary and rhetoric of some of the leaders of the national movement helped to stir up this radicalism on both sides. Also, there was no unity in the Georgian National Movement regarding national issues. There were two approaches, two ways - the more radical, the way of **Zviad Gamsakhurdia,** and the more constructive - the way of Zurab Chavchavadze (leader of the Ilia Chavchavadze Society). I attended the rally of many thousands in Tbilisi where Zviad Gamsakhurdia said: "The Abkhazian nation has not existed historically. Abkhazia was the name of Western Georgia and Abkhazians were Western Georgians. So, the Abkhaz nation was the same Georgian nation, the Western Georgian nation. And those old Christian Abkhazians, Georgian Abkhazians, no longer exist today. The name 'Abkhazian' is incorrectly used today in

connection with this Absua tribe, Absua, or Absarni - is a tribe of North Caucasian, Adyghe origin. We are not against the self-determination of any tribe or group if it wants to be a nation. Especially, if it has certain signs of the nation today, but in its historical territory, in the North Caucasus. If this tribe or tribes realize this, we will support them, but on the condition that they must restore historical justice, give us our land and water, and settle there where they came from."[38]

I remember the repeated shouts of thousands of excited Georgians, "Vivat!," after this speech. This short speech should be included in the textbooks to illustrate how not to talk about national issues in a polyethnic state. Even if Zviad Gamsakhurdia's opinion was true, it would not change anything in the self-identification of Abkhazians - an ethnos living in this area. Moreover, such a position contributed to the national mobilization and the radicalization of Abkhazians.

Especially with the Americans, and also with the Europeans, arguments such as: they (for example, Ossetians) settled in Georgia only 400 years ago, etc., seem very weak. I have heard such an opinion from many - Armenians are not an autochthonous, aboriginal nation, they "only" settled on the territory of Armenia 2,000 years ago. Operating with these time indicators and parameters is totally unacceptable for modern

> *Any ethnos that lives for a long time in a certain area, where graves, chapels and other social-living institutions appear in that area, it (the ethnos) incorporates this area into its cultural matrix. It becomes his territory as well.*

politics. It is simply very fruitless, even when historical material is used for political purposes. But, unfortunately, most of the political or scientific-academic circles (not to mention the broad masses) remain in the positions of a completely primordial approach.

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38 Zviad Gamsakhurdia. "Abkhazian Nation Has not Existed Historically." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pe4QP3_u3WY

In the next section, we will talk about the role of religion and the church in the formation and development of the national idea, the peculiarities of the secularization and resecularization process, and the relationship between freedom of expression and religious dignity.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND THE CHURCH IN THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL IDEA. OBSTACLES OF THE SECULARIZATION AND RESECULARIZATION PROCESSES. THE ISSUE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND RELIGIOUS DIGNITY

John Pelushi, the Metropolitan of Korçë (Albanian Orthodox Church), rightly points out that nationalism and narrow ethnic understanding are unacceptable to the Orthodox Church and that a narrow ethnic understanding is closely linked to the emergence of nationalist ideas in the intelligentsia in the nineteenth century. For the nationalist-minded intelligentsia, the Church was only a means to an end for their nationalist goals. In his view, the Church did not enthusiastically meet the emergence of the nationalist movement because it felt that it did not conform to the universal nature of Orthodoxy but it was unable to drive out the demons of nationalism.

The process of the overthrow of the communist regime was accompanied by an economic and political (institutional) crisis and a situation of moral anomie (a state of society characterized by a weakening of the norms that govern social relations or an indifferent attitude towards them and when individuals do not have or do not recognize any solid guidelines). This situation was used by radical nationalists to achieve their political goals, including stirring up religious sentiments while, for example, spreading the notion that the native religion was endangered (many Balkans ironically called the Balkan wars atheist religious wars, writes John Pelushi).[39]

A similar position is held by the American scholar, Svante Cornell, who rejects the view that the conflicts in the Caucasus are the result of religious controversy. According to him, religion played a very limited

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39 By David Khositashvili "Ethnic Conflicts and the Ortho-dox Church." (05.02.2011). see at http://www.orthodoxtheology. ge/?s=ეთნიკური+კონფლიქტები

role in the conflicts in the region - only to the extent that religion is one of the defining factors of ethnic identity. He believes that the Caucasian conflicts are ethnopolitical in nature because they are based on the politicization of ethnicity (and not religion).

In any case, religion is one of the main factors determining ethnic identity so it becomes necessary to analyze the processes of some kind of revival of Orthodoxy and Islam, a kind of resecularization in a country that has declared a Western course. How compatible are Orthodoxy and Islam with Western values? I think talking about harmonious compatibility is superfluous, especially if we recall the public statements-sermons made by the high-ranking members of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the near past. This situation is extremely dangerous in terms of triggering internal conflicts as it causes a lack of willingness to cooperate with and tolerate other religions in the country. In a country where one church has traditionally dominated, finding a place for religious minorities there is a painful process. Additionally, the positions of religious fundamentalism in our country have not been weakened but, on the contrary, they have been strengthened. I am talking about the widespread sentiments about granting state religion status to the Orthodox Church and restricting the rights of religious minorities. Finally, the identity between Georgia and Orthodoxy was "signed."

The process of the nationalization of religion is deepening which, in the language of Orthodox theology, is called phyletism, or heresy, because it implies the division of the churches according to nationalities.

The historical experience, centuries of tolerance that we so often mention, is somehow getting forgotten. The fact that the peaceful coexistence of Orthodox, Monophysites, Muslims and Jews side by side on Georgian soil is explained by Orthodox thought and worldview.

"We are not scared of the diversity of religions. Georgians, crucified for their religion, know how to respect other people's religions. That is why there is no example in our history that a Georgian wants to ever

oppress and persecute another's religion. Armenians, Jews, Muslims themselves, living among us, cannot blame us for this. Persecuted and oppressed for their faith in another country - here they found a peaceful shelter – the freedom of conscience." These are the words of Ilia Chavchavadze.[40]

According to Irakli Kakabadze, the positive side of Georgian Christian culture was that narrow ethnic chauvinism was unfamiliar to us. The architectural complex of Tbilisi Maidan and the ethnic composition of Avlabari indicate the cosmopolitanism of Georgian (and Tbilisi) culture. Let us also remember that, unlike the Crusades, Georgian Christianity has never shared a dogma of religious "just wars," meaning that violence has never been justified. However, this is a "never" relative concept.

Since the end of the twentieth century, we have regularly heard the open preaching of ethnic chauvinism and anti - humanism by various public secular and religious figures...[41] There is an opinion that our "tolerance from ancient times" refers only to the distant past and that the coexistence of religions was dictated by the political situation and conjuncture. A lot of time has passed since the Middle Ages but nothing much has changed in favor of the convergence of the denominations.[42]

It should be noted that in most EU member states, traditional local churches have certain privileges. Europe is aware that religion is an important feature of European society and that the national consciousness and values of European countries have been shaped within the Christian Church for centuries. One of the main reasons for the non-adoption of the European Constitution was the fact that the European community could not agree on the definition of the role of the Christian religion and the Church and the conditions for the confirmation and fixation of this role in the draft Constitution.

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40 Ilia Chavchavadze. "Ottoman Georgia." p. 4. http://library.accept.ge/?id=62

41 Irakli Kakabadze. "Against Ethno-chauvinism." p. 1. (20.07.2011). http://european.ge

42 "Is Georgia in Danger of Reviving Religious Fundamentalism?" https://politikuriideologiebi.wordpress.com/2012/10/28

An interesting example in this regard is the US. There is no traditional religion in the country and, therefore, the state has declared religious neutrality but, at the same time, Congress has its own priest, the army has mostly Christian chaplains and the Bible is used when taking the oath. Religious neutrality does not prevent (as we have already talked about above) that despite the equal number of Catholics and Protestants, the spiritual order of the country is still defined by the English "Protestantism."

I think the topic of religion is one of the reasons why Turkey is not admitted into the EU. A joke from the political backstage on this topic (why Turkey is not admitted in the EU): "Because Turkey is very big, very poor and very ... Muslim." Studies show that worship in Europe has declined significantly over the past 20 years. At the same time, in virtually every member state of the Council of Europe, there is a visible increase in the number of Muslim communities and their strengthening. There is a very serious problem here, including for Georgia. The point is that the Muslim community is not secularized to the same extent and to the same degree as is the Christian community in Europe. We are dealing with the opposite process. In the new situation, after the declared collapse of multiculturalism, the Muslim segment of society responds with resecularization as a means of gaining, preserving or protecting identity. On the one hand, there is a growing secularization of Christian European countries, a decrease in religiosity and, especially, ecclesiasticism and, on the other hand, an increase in the religiosity and ecclesiasticism of a large part of the Muslim population in these countries (a reaction to the phenomenon of a search for new identities). The issue of the relationship between freedom of expression and religious dignity has been the subject of active discussion. In recent years, we have witnessed a situation where the absoluteness of the freedom of expression has led to a violation of the religious sentiments of a certain segment of society. The prevailing view in the West is that the right of the freedom of expression should not be restricted because

of the growing religious sensitivity of a particular religious group. Achieving a harmonious, conflict-free relationship between these two rights (between the freedom of expression and the protection of religious dignity) is imposed on a person with high moral standards and civic qualities.

Achieving this would not be so difficult in a religiously homogeneous society between believers, atheists and agnostics. But the complexity and sensitivity of the issue is increasing, mainly against the background of the numerical growth and resecularization of the Muslim parish. The existence of these two visions: on the one hand, the freedom of expression which is the "holy cow" for the European socio-cultural matrix (secularized Western Christians and non-believers) and, on the other hand, the protection of religious dignity (the growing in number and citizenship of the Muslim community) is one of the most acute problems for today's multireligious Europe, including our country. In this regard, after September 11, 2001, the most notable terrorist attack was the attack on Charlie Hebdo.

After a theoretical and comparative discussion, in the next section you will read specific stories about the reasons that led to the collapse of Georgia's national policy in the first years of independence.

THE COLLAPSE OF GEORGIA'S NATIONAL POLICY IN THE FIRST YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

The Abkhaz conflict may be the most brutal and severe of the conflicts that erupted before Georgia gained its independence.

Factual Circumstances about Abkhazia in Brief

Abkhazia was an autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia. Abkhazians were the most restless of the 80 ethnic groups living in Georgia, although not as large in number. The total population of Georgia was 5.4 million of which 95,000 were Abkhazians. In March 1921, after the Sovietization, Abkhazia was voluntarily renamed the Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia as it voluntarily signed on to the membership to the Soviet Union and was recognized by the Georgian Revolutionary Committee. This is the basis on which the Abkhazians demanded independence and on which basis six Abkhazian leaders wrote a letter to the Soviet leadership in 1988 where they outlined their claims against Georgia.[43]

The situation escalated in the spring of 1989. On March 18, the Abkhazian People's Assembly was held in the village of Likhni in Gudauta (considered the historical center of Abkhazia). The assembly drafted a petition, known as *Likhni Letter* and sent it to the Soviet leadership demanding the secession of Abkhazia from Georgia. This demand caused political tensions in Tbilisi. On April 2, a large demonstration of Georgians was organized by the Ilia Chavchavadze Society in Sokhumi. Among them were the leaders of the national movement from Tbilisi - Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Merab Kostava and Zurab Chavchavadze. On April 4, a permanent action started in Tbilisi with the hunger strike of students. The radical wing of the national movement came at the head of the process. Georgian nationalism finally took on a radical face with its street rallies and demonstrations. In addition to the emotional

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43 Svante Cornell. "Religion as a Factor in Caucasian Conflicts." http://www.culturedialogue.com/resources/library/translations/svantecornell.shtml

background (April 9 and its aftermath), the situation was complicated by personal disagreements, intolerance and enmity between the leaders of the national liberation movement. The situation was tense. Twelve men were killed and several hundred wounded in clashes in Sokhumi in the summer of 1989.

In August 1990, the Supreme Council of Abkhazia declared Abkhazia a full-fledged allied republic, effectively seceding from Georgia. The main catalyst for the conflict was the universal referendum of March 1991 based on the alliance treaty submitted by Gorbachev. The Georgian leadership banned the population of the country from participating in this referendum. Nevertheless, Abkhazians, who were positive about maintaining the Soviet Union, took part in the referendum and strongly supported the preservation of the USSR. Abkhazia restored the 1925 Constitution which defined it as an independent but "united republic of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia on the basis of a special treaty" which, given the reality at the time, meant a de facto declaration of independence. However, it must be said that the door to federal unification with Georgia was still open. Unfortunately, this opportunity was not used and the reaction to Abkhazia's action was followed with the start of hostilities on 14 August.[44]

Factual Circumstances about South Ossetia (Samachablo) in Brief

On August 15, 1989, a resolution was issued on the state program of the Georgian language on the basis of which the constitutional status of the Georgian language was determined. The Georgian language should have been used in all aspects of public life. Given that the majority of the Ossetian population did not speak Georgian, Adamon Nikhas considered the document discriminatory and anti-democratic. Public demonstrations and strikes began in the region. On September 26, 1989, the District Council of People's Deputies of the Twentieth convocation of South Ossetia raised the issue of adding the following paragraph to Article 75 of the current Constitution of the Georgian SSR

44 Ibid.

before the Supreme Council of Georgia: "Ossetian is the state language in the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast." The Georgian government ignored the demand for a constitutional amendment on the Ossetian language which led to the full-scale "War of Laws."

Meanwhile, the Ossetian People's Front Adamon Nikhas supported the demand of Abkhazians to leave Georgia and, in turn, sent a petition to Moscow demanding the unification of North and South Ossetia.[45]

On September 20, 1990, the Council of People's Deputies of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast adopted a resolution on the transformation of the oblast into the "Soviet Democratic Republic of South Ossetia." This decision was revoked by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR on September 21. Nevertheless, the Fifteenth Session of the District Council upheld its decision and began preparations for the Supreme Council and Local Council elections which were scheduled for December 2, 1990. In response, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia passed a resolution on November 22, 1990, repealing the act and, a couple of weeks later on December 11, 1990, it decided to "abolish the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast." In exchange, special rules were announced on the territory of the Tskhinvali and Java regions." The abolition of the autonomous oblast, in my opinion, was a mistake to which was added an even bigger mistake - the so-called "March on Tskhinvali" under the pretext of protecting the Georgian majority of the city. In January 1991, a direct military confrontation broke out between the parties, followed by casualties, hostage-taking, robbery and chaos that lasted for a year. North Caucasus volunteers were ready to intervene and Russia openly sided with the Ossetians. The situation could have escalated into a wider Caucasus war but this was followed by the Sochi talks between Yeltsin and Shevardnadze, the deployment of peacekeepers in the conflict zone and the cessation of hostilities. Above, we have seen Svante Cornell's position that all five conflicts in the Caucasus region (Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia,

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45 Ibid.

Ingushetia-North Ossetia, Chechnya-Russia) are ethnopolitical. They did not contain an ideological component and the economic factor only seemed to contribute to the conflict. The reason for the conflict that takes place over the control of a certain territory is ethnicity, rivalry with another ethnic unity and the fear that you will be dominated by members of another group. In this sense, the main determinant of a conflict is the problem of defense which is based on fear. For Svante Cornell, this is a manifestation of nationalism within the conflicting ethnic units. These types of conflicts can be called ethnopolitical conflicts based on politicized ethnicity. In these ethno-political conflicts, religion often plays the role of a separating factor of two unities. Religious belief may be an additional factor in aggravating the conflict but it has not been a causative factor in the aforementioned conflicts.[46]

In addition to the factual circumstances surrounding the two autonomous formations, it is no less important to see the ideological vision and emotional background that accompanied all of the events at the time and to a large extent still accompany the ethnopolitical conflicts and challenges that Georgia faces today. On June 21-25, 1989 in Tbilisi, in the big concert hall of the Philharmonic, the congress of the "People's Front" was held in which I participated. One of my articles, entitled "On One of the Most Famous Sayings of Merab Mamadarshvili," was inspired by this event. At this congress, it became clear that there are two opposing camps in Georgia regarding national policy and the depth of the polarization of these camps.

By 1989, the communist regime was already in agony while the national liberation movement, by contrast, was on the rise. The hall of the Philharmonic was full and exhilarated. Merab Mamardashvili from the tribune, in his usual unhurried manner, told the hall: "There is a supreme, absolute value - the truth which for me stands above all other values, including the love of the homeland. This is a fundamental Christian approach." This thesis has been expressed many times in his

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46 Ibid.

writings but I first heard a much more "dangerous" continuation of this thesis only in this speech: "if I see my nation going against the truth, I will oppose my nation…" Some of the delegates applauded the philosopher fervently.[47] The other one (maybe more in number) - shouted indignantly. It became impossible to continue Mamardashvili's speech. A break was announced during which I tried to share my positive attitude towards this speech with the philosopher Robert Petriashvili. His reaction turned out to be unexpected for me.... When the homeland is in trouble and when the homeland needs our help, then the interests of the homeland must be put above the truth, he told me. As you know, such a period stood for Georgia at that time. I am still not ready to absolutely deny the validity of this view but even then, 30 years ago, it became clear to me that there will always be a worldview between Merab Mamardashvili and those who put a certain value above the truth due to this or that circumstance... I believe that this watershed still exists in the socio-political discourse of Georgia on the national issue.

Was Merab Mamardashvili the first person who raised the issue of the relationship between truth and patriotism? Naturally, no. The issue of the relationship between the truth and the homeland interests is as relevant today as it was in Bible times. It is on the pages of the Bible that we can read about this relationship. Merab Mamardashvili himself states that this is a biblical, Christian truth. Among them, under certain conditions, to fight against your own nation... The phenomenon of Merab Mamardashvili is that he clearly and loudly raised the issue of the relationship between truth and patriotism in the Georgian reality (and it cost him his life). I should also mention that conveying the problem, processing it from the standpoint of truth or patriotism is not completely correct and distorts Merab Mamardashvili's opinion. It opposes not the truth and national interests in general, but the truth and the "imaginary" interests of the nation. Finally, the truth cannot contradict the interests of the homeland. It can only oppose the "imaginary" interests of

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47 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAJLVpEC3Y0

the homeland. Without this explanation, the dilemma of "truth or patriotism" sounds irrelevant or inexpedient. Given the context of Merab Mamardashvili's thought, it would be more appropriate to use the following oppositions: "truth and patriotism," "truth and the real interests of the state" or "truth and pseudopatriotism." He believed that people differ from each other with nationality, culture and states and resemble each other to the extent that each of us has a personality that is internally universal. But under what conditions does the 'person in him' 'start speaking' louder? He lives a free, full life according to his moral traditions and has the means of organic development in his cultural matrix. When did he lose his ethnic and religious identity and performs some unskilled work in some dusty reservation? Some of Merab Mamardashvili's statements in this regard may indicate that he did not properly appreciate the importance of cultural, religious and state factors in the process of personality formation. Does the formation of a national (in a person) consciousness to some extent precede the formation of an individual? There is talk that, for example, England or France has a certain advantage in establishing the conditions that should help create personal consciousness. This "advantage" is in comparison with the people and the nations facing the task of creating or restoring their statehood (the phenomenon of "Belated Nations"). Nations that go back in history like us. This task requires the restoration-acquisition of a number of state, cultural and spiritual qualities and attributes.

Society at large, does not like people like Merab Mamardashvili. Masses do not like the thinkers who irritate and bother them with their questions and reflections. People who awaken and force them to stay awake and, thereby, disrupt Obi-Wan's comfort way of living - the innate product of the mind's sleep. It is sleep that brings comfort, it is the one who is mentally asleep that absolves himself of responsibility and transfers it to someone else to make a choice...

Such thinkers do not like the government either because they understand the intentions of the government and reveal its plans and

activities. In this respect, nothing has changed in time: we have killed the very person whose whole creation and work served the cause of awakening the nation - Ilia Chavchavadze: "Constant sleep, sleep..." Neither the government nor the masses forgive those who aim to seek the truth independently.

Merab Mamardashvili said what he had to say at a time when agitated people were embarking on the path of ethnic nationalism (which, I repeat, cost us dearly). At that time, it was enough to utter a few ritual phrases aloud from the rostrum followed by ritual shouts (Vivat! Vivat! Vivat!) to win the love of the people. The process of returning to the history of the country requires the search for the best ways of modernization and its establishment on the world political map. In recent years, Mamardashvili's reflection has gained even more intensity and topicality, especially in the analysis of such approaches as the effective governance of the country, ensuring the security of the country in the new conditions and maintaining the unity of the country, etc. The space of truth is as narrow today as it was during the speech of Merab Mamardashvili at the first congress of the People's Front... The homeland is still in trouble and it still faces some difficulties. The transition period in Georgia has gone through an adaptation period or, rather, it has mutated and brought the process of democratization of the country within its framework. Merab Mamardashvili is tolerated only because of his international authority... that is why he is remembered, his bust is standing on Rustaveli Avenue, but his work is not read. This situation reminds me of our attitude towards Vazha Pshavela's work.

Vazha Pshavela's vision of the national and the individual, the primacy and significance of a person (conveyed in the classic "school" poems, "Aluda Ketelauri" and "Host and Guest"), his vision of the relationship between patriotism and cosmopolitanism - is an incredible basis for the development of civic nationalism. Aluda becomes an independent and free person when he sees the dignity and uniqueness of another person and this fact becomes very interesting and valuable for him.

The same goes for Jokola. Vazha is praised, he is taught in school, called a poet-philosopher, but the nation does not live by his morals, by his philosophy. We have placed Vazha's moral code on the periphery of our consciousness and recall it only during ritual performances.

In his speech at the same congress, Zviad Gamsakhurdia focused on the autonomous units of Georgia and called them "illegal formations." Zviad Gamsakhurdia opposed the point of the People's Front program which spoke about the drafting of a constitution that fully reflected the interests of the Georgian nation and other ethnic groups living in the republic. There is a quote from his speech: "Again equation, my friends. Georgia is a country of Georgians, this axiom should be presented and reflected in this program, the Constitution should express the interests of the Georgian nation and, at the same time, the interests of all individuals, regardless of their nationality and not the interests of other nations, we are not fighting for the interests of Azerbaijan, friends, and if anyone fights, he will be defeated."[48]

This and many of his other speeches show that Zviad Gamsakhurdia meant only ethnic Georgians in the Georgian nation. He equated the protection of the rights of Azerbaijanis with the struggle for the interests of Azerbaijan. Compare Georgia's first president's speech to the words of Clermonton at French Assembly in 1790: "To the Jew as an individual, we give everything, to the Jew as a Jew - nothing." There are qualitative similarities between these two positions. According to Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the People's Front fought for the protection of ethnic groups, Abkhazians and Ossetians, who already had a defender in the form of the Kremlin. Now is the time to protect our own interests. In his opinion, for example, the national interests of the Georgian nation regarding land was not mentioned in the program of the People's Front but equated Georgians with other groups. Zviad Gamsakhurdia also did not like the fact that the People's Front newspaper was bilingual. By the way, the program of the People's Front was not published in Russian

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48 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kd3FGKfJTtc (March 31, 2017).

which made it impossible to introduce its ideas to a fairly large segment of the population.

It should be noted that Zviad Gamsakhurdia's positions on a number of issues changed after he came to power - he acquired more inclusiveness and a civic character but remained contradictory, eclectic and impulsive until the end. He found it difficult to step out of the role of the leader of the national movement and become the leader of the country.

On May 26, 1989, Gamsakhurdia said: "Long live an independent, free, Christian, invincible Georgia." It was a historic moment of turning to religion. Religious rhetoric became a part of politics and a tool for mobilizing the nation. His views are sharply primordial. He did not agree with the idea that the Georgian nation was formed in the nineteenth century. He believed that the autochthonous population of southern Europe was Proto-Iberian and from which the late Europeans were descended. To this line belonged a large part of Asia Minor: the Meskhetians (Moskhes), Cappadocians, Colchians, Taokhs and others. According to Gamsakhurdia, they were all branches of one - Kartvelian or Proto-Iberian origin. Today, only two of the Iberian lineages survive - the Pyrenean-Iberians (Basques) and the Caucasian-Iberians (Georgians). The rest assimilated with the Indo-Europeans. This assimilation began in the third millennium BC after which the Hittite and Hellenic worlds were strengthened. He saw the historical mission of Georgia in connecting the Western and Eastern worlds. In his opinion, the main role in the development of Christianity is played by the peoples of Kartvelian origin and, consequently, they should regain the positions of the spiritual teacher of mankind. "...This generation will be the main agent of spirituality, Christianity and it will disclose the rest of sinful humanity."[49]

Naturally, such an irrational vision, especially when it belongs to the president of a country, caused tensions in a multi-ethnic country. In the rhetoric of the representatives of the national liberation movement, one

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49 Irakli Chkheidze. Ibid.

might often come across the term of the "legal population of Georgia" which, accordingly, emphasized the existence of an illegal population. The concept of the "Georgian nation" had a unique ethnic meaning and only ethnic Georgians were implied to be within it. Such sentiments were not limited to members of the political elite. It is safe to say that a large proportion of Georgian scholars are primordialists, although they do not acknowledge this or call their theoretical approach primordialist. Zviad Gamsakhurdia believed that the rights of Georgians were being violated especially in the regions where the Soviet government had established ethnocracies of non-Georgian populations. The decline of the Georgian language and the dominance of the Russian contributed to discrimination against Georgians. In his opinion, it was necessary to implement legal guarantees vis-à-vis the Georgian language population and the real implementation of the state status of the Georgian language. He did not deny the need to protect the rights of national minorities: "We do not neglect the rights of minorities who legally reside on our land and contribute to the struggle of the Georgian nation for freedom and independence. In this regard, we intend to maintain the existing autonomies of national minorities in Georgia ..." [Zviad Gamsakhurdia](#) said this as the chairman of the Supreme Council. But on the whole, as we have already mentioned above, his rhetoric and vocabulary caused fear and instability among ethnic minorities living in Georgia.

Unfortunately, the word "Tatar" is still used today in relation to Muslim Georgians (Adjarians) in Georgia. At the same time, the word "Georgian" is still used in Adjara in relation to non-Adjara people. You will still find the word "Georgian" meaning non-Mingrelian in the villages of Samegrelo. Does this mean that we are still an unassembled nation? The Georgian model of national unity was not based on secular principles and, for various reasons, it had a strong religious dimension. Ilia Chavchavadze was still trying to dispel fears towards Muslims. By engaging in social and educational activities, he sought to gain the trust and sympathy of local Muslims. Almost a hundred years have passed after that...

[Tamta Khalvashi](#), an anthropologist from Batumi, quotes the memory

of her mother which I will offer you in full: "When I started going to school in Tbilisi in 1970, I realized for the first time that Adjarians were perceived differently in the capital. When I told the class that I was from Adjara, one of the teachers half-jokingly said to me, 'This means you are a Tatar.' I even remember how one of my classmates asked me if I spoke Georgian in Adjara. It was a very unpleasant discovery for me. I grew up with the awareness that I was Georgian but later I discovered that not everyone thought so. That is why as a child I tried to hide that I was from Adjara. I was ashamed to say that I am from Adjara."

Until 1950, no secretary of the Communist Party in Adjara was of Adjarian descent. In order to become full members of Soviet society, Adjarian Muslims were forced to renounce their own Muslim traditions and identity.

During one of the rallies in Batumi in 1989, Zviad Gamsakhurdia addressed the audience: "Adjarians, you are Georgians, too!" This seemingly harmless phrase has caused widespread confusion and outrage in society. It took us years for the representatives of the national movement at that time to calm down the grief and embarrassment caused by this phrase in Adjara.

Since the 1990s, the Soviet secular project has been replaced by Christian nationalism. Georgia was equated with Orthodoxy in Georgia during which the situation for Adjarian Muslims became even more complicated. Because nationality implied a particular religious identity, with specific histories and cultural forms, in post-Soviet Adjara Islam and the Ottoman heritage were again considered as undesirable "relics." Extending greetings to Georgian Muslims on Muslim religious holidays is still unacceptable for many Orthodox Christians. Also, many share the opinion that a Muslim cannot be considered as a Georgian because of his faith.

Much has been done from a legal point of view to transition to a civic nation format after gaining independence. Under the Citizenship Act of July 1991, citizenship was granted to all residents of the republic, regardless of the length of having lived in the country. Children of stateless people born on the territory of Georgia were also granted

Georgian citizenship. It should be noted that citizenship laws adopted in Latvia and Estonia lagged behind this law as they were less democratic.

Before the 1991 independence referendum, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, in his speech given to the Abkhazian people, mentioned that he approves their "national and cultural rights, statehood, language, culture, Abkhazian school and theatre". In the Law on the Amendments to the Constitution of the Abkhazian ASSR adopted on July 9, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia allocated 28 seats to ethnic Abkhazians (17% of the population) and 26 seats to Georgians (46% of the population). Due to this approach, which some called "apartheid," Zviad Gamsakhurdia was widely criticized. It must be said that the result of such decisions and a changed rhetoric may have been the fact that in the referendum of March 31, 1991, the independence of Georgia was supported by the majority of non-Georgians.

But this still failed to maintain Georgia's unity and Gamsakhurdia's era, imbued with contradictions and radicalism, ended in civil war. The Georgian national project failed. The Georgian National Movement and the political and intellectual elite failed to ensure the peaceful transformation of the country.

Maintaining unity still remains a serious internal challenge and it is one of the key components for ensuring national security. This issue is a serious challenge for states like Canada, Spain, Belgium, Italy and Great Britain as well. It is especially difficult to give an adequate response to this challenge for Georgia due to the shortness of its post-Soviet history as well. South Ossetia and Abkhazia were de facto separated from Georgia in 1990-93. Both conflicts led to a small civil war in which, I repeat, the Georgian government and society were defeated. I see the 2008 war as a continuation of these conflicts. It is just that the positions of a third stakeholder, Russia, were more clearly revealed here. Both stages of these two conflicts, 1991-93 and 2008, created the most difficult economic, political and psychological problems for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Conflicts have had and still have a serious impact on Georgia's economic and political development. It can be said

that today Georgia is much farther from resolving conflicts than it was 25-30 years ago. The reason for this is that Russia has recognized both Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. And this, is despite the fact that during the periods of Shevardnadze, Saakashvili and the Georgian Dream, attempts to build a civil nation have continued.

On March 23, 1993, the government of Eduard Shevardnadze re-adopted an inclusive law on citizenship which was also liberal in nature. The law did not provide for requirements such as the knowledge of the state language or the history of the country. The 1995 Constitution finally gave the official Georgian national project a secular character. Full freedom of religion and beliefs was recognized as was the special role of the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church in the history of the country. The principle of the separation of state and church was also affirmed. There was a disagreement over the existence or non-existence of the rights of national minorities. Finally (unlike the 1921 Constitution), no special chapter in the 1995 Constitution was dedicated to minorities. Various provisions emphasize that all citizens of Georgia are equal, regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation. Such an approach is written in the civic nature of the national project. By not segregating separate ethnic or religious groups, the government affirmed the universal equality of its citizens.

I would also like to point out that the constitution and constitutional norms do not have the same sacral significance in Georgia as in consolidated democracies where the rule of law is the basis of political life. In a society like ours, the main issue is not the law but the attitude towards the law. We are accustomed to living in the conditions of two truths, two realities - written and unwritten, formal and informal. However, this does not deny the importance and value of having a good constitution and good laws. On January 14, 1999, the ethnicity line was removed from citizen ID cards which sparked a wave of protests. Guram Sharadze compared the removal of national identity to Georgia's "testing ground for cosmopolitanism."

THE ISSUE OF LANGUAGE.
LINGUISTIC POLICY.
THE ISSUE OF EDUCATION

National identity is tied to language. Language contitutes the strongest part of an identity and it connects each of us with our creative skills and roots. We must, therefore, consider language as a creative charge, will and with the potential of building of our universe as a whole. According to Zaza Piralishvili, our socio-cultural system is semantically constructed. I agree with the opinion that language and linguistic activity are not a simple image (mirror) of reality or of the world but a mechanism for creating a new reality and new worlds. Charles Pearce believed that every word, every sentence and every book is a symbol. One of the values of the symbol is that it allows us to predict the future. Often it is the two different visions of the future that Suren Zolyan believes are the cause of conflict. Visions of the future are often restorations of the past put into the present. They represent the restored version of the "correct" state of affairs that was violated in the past. This is a kind of semantics of conflict; that is, the desired future is created on the basis of the "correct" prehistory. Constructing the past, its narration is best done in the native language.[50] And here, we face the main problem of language policy. Narration in the mother tongue of national minorities contributes to their ethnic and national mobilization and to the proper and "correct" construction of the past and the future which often does not coincide with the dominant nation's visions of the past and the future. Hence, there is the fears of the dominant nation... Does the support of national minority languages mean the support of national minorities' own versions which are often different from the "official" version of the country's history? Ignoring minority languages, on the other hand, can contribute to the growth of destructive potential.

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50 СУРЕН ЗОЛЯН. Логика предпочтений и решение конфликтов (на примере Карабахского конфликта). Сб. науч. тр. / РАН. ИНИОН. М., 2012.

When talking about language policy, we must definitely discuss the importance of the education system in general. So, for example, the most massive narrative is the school history textbook. Conflicts and aggression are often fueled by historical and political myths cited in school textbooks. Remember the words of Ernest Renan: "Forgetfulness or, rather, historical lies, is one of the key factors in the creation of the nation." According to Zaza Piralishvili, the modern state should offer the student a kind of formalized intellectual environment in which the student will be able to move with others (enter into a dialogue, polemic...). The individual must share the paradigms that make him functional and sociable in society. Otherwise, culture, morality and religion may fall victim to the destructive potential that lurks in the pursuit of self-preservation. For Merab Mamardashvili, a person is constantly in the process of forming himself. Consequently, history is also the history of trying to become a human. "Man does not exist, he is in the process of constant creation." A great danger on the way to this creation is the new, modern and contemporary barbarism which can also be called cultural barbarism. The inability to express your inner world in your native tongue, get a proper education and be a part of a formalized intellectual environment as a member who is given his functionality contribute to the spread of cultural barbarism. Education plays a leading role in shaping a democratic society and in the fight against ignorance, stereotypes and intolerance. Ernest Gellner describes the basic characteristics of an industrial, modern society: universal literacy and a high level of technical-arithmetic and general knowledge. Members of this community are required to be mobile and they must always be ready to move from one activity to another. They should have a common elementary education that will enable them to master the relevant textbooks and instructions for their new responsibilities. At work, they are required to be able to make contact with many strangers. They should be able to communicate in a non-personal, context-free written manner. Consequently, these communications must be completed through general, stan-

dard linguistic means. The guarantee of social achievement that the education system represents is expanding and becoming necessary. For most people, today's income, status, security and self-esteem depend on their education. The boundaries of the culture in which they were educated coincide with the boundaries of a world in which they could satisfy themselves professionally or morally. For a person, education is his most valuable investment and ultimately it gives him his own identity. Ernest Gellner calls modern man "Mameluke." Modern man has nothing special to do with kin groups anymore. Also, kin groups no longer stand between anonymous communities defined by culture. The culture received from school gives the industrial person the status of an essential person for society. Naturally, it would be pointless to deceive ourselves into believing that origins, wealth and certain connections do not matter to modern society. However, privileges are less advertised today and, at the same time, the attitude towards them is heterogeneous. A person today must acquire the knowledge and skills that enable him to occupy a place in society and make him "what he is." Only the state can carry out this function and only the state can control this institution which has the most important and crucial function - the school. Only the state can guarantee that its educational products are not of poor quality. Even in countries where the most important parts of the educational mechanism are in the hands of private or religious organizations, the control over the creation of viable and helpful people is still exercised (or should be exercised) by the state. There was a time when a person was created by a village or a clan. That time is gone and it is gone forever. People of the agrarian era can be compared to any plant species that can survive in the wild environment. Industrial man must even be compared to an artificially created or bred species that can survive and breathe normally only in artificially saturated and specially created conditions and an atmosphere. The creation of this "artificial human being," says Ernest Gellner, "is the prerogative of national education and communication systems." A certain standard can only be achieved

with an extremely monolithic educational system. Its only effective creator, maintainer and defender, as we have already said, is the state. Only a state can ensure the equality of a communion with education and culture.[51]

Above, I told you about Gigi Tevzadze's concept of a "great identity." According to Gigi Tevzadze, we have every reason to believe that the "great identity" as a social and political phenomenon arose after it became possible to introduce a set of specific ideas and notions into large groups. After that, a unified education system and the mass media emerged. Only through the media and the education system is it possible to make a system of ideas and conceptions which will be common, precious and irreplaceable for every citizen.

51 Ernest Gellner. Nations and Nationalism. Tbilisi, Nekeri Publishing House 200

CONCLUSION. COMPLEX POLYPHONY
VERSUS CONSENSUS

We live in a world where a small deviation towards nationalism may ensure success in today's elections...

We live in a world where the formation of its national project and the pursuit of a rational strategic policy in difficult geopolitical conditions has been and is happening.

We remain a society of unguaranteed democracy in which democratic values coexist with traditional values and in which there are syncretic clusters with their traditional, modernist and postmodernist elements and rules of conduct. This circumstance makes it possible for the country to develop, including in undesirable directions.

Modern globalist tendencies, in the face of which the confrontation of civilizations, cultures and religions has not weakened, prove once again the validity of the idea that only the openness of culture, the mastery of the modern logic of thinking and rational and strategic approaches to building a country provide a worthy place for any society in the world. They are the proof that the complex model of the modernization of a country requires the study and consideration of the specific, ethnocultural, ethno-psychological, historical, mental and other peculiarities of all components of the population (national minorities, ethnic groups, sub-ethnic groups, etc.). Every ethnos possesses its own scheme of interpretation of the world and its own symbolic field which cardinally determines the matrix of its behavioral coordinates. The irrationality of this matrix nourishes the complex of cultural superiority over neighbors. In general, negative self-identification is common in Caucasian societies - "Who I am not".

Due to traumatic consciousness, the temporary vector of Georgians as we have already written above is directed towards the idealized and mythologized past. Due to the constant attempts to reproduce the past, we find it difficult to modernize and adapt to time and epoch. We find it difficult to go beyond the medieval paradigm of state-building through

a national mythological narrative when certain mythological, religious and transcendental principles are declared as the basis of politics. A myth is something that has never been and never will be but somehow it always exists. National mythology is the basis of national identity and it is a reality that is perceived not on a cognitive and rational level but on the level of feelings, desires and dreams. Myth is invincible because logic does not have the power to overcome emotion. Ethnic-religious-mythological dictatorship as a result of this reality is the constant of our worldview. Thus, for example, mythological and contemporary notions on the inter-religious theme dominate society. At the official level, political-diplomatic equilibrium is frequent.

In general, this topic is still taboo at the discursive level. Ethnocultural analysis is particularly important for "historical societies" in which culture plays a dominant role as opposed to "post-industrial societies" where culture is "domesticated" through socio-political institutions, law and abstract formal norms and relations. Naturally, the cultural context analysis should not lead to the dictation of cultural stereotypes.

The need to establish a civic nation in Georgia, apart from two "frozen conflicts," is determined by the ethnic composition of the country. The general situation in the South Caucasus and, one might say, in the Caucasus in general depends significantly on how inter-religious and inter-national relations will develop in Georgia. Properly studying the problems and pursuing an effective strategic policy based on them requires political will, intellectual resources and social order primarily from civil society.

In conclusion, I would like to touch on another issue. On the one hand, there is a perfectly legitimate assumption that successful communication is possible only between cultures that share more or less similar systems of values. Among them, therefore, visions for solving ethnic, cultural and religious problems are dominated by the position and approach of reaching a consensus - by finding common, identical and unifying elements. This approach is naturally valuable. But we must remember

that there is a deeper and often more effective way of approaching an agreement (and overcoming a problem). It is a way which leads one to coexist peacefully and without conflict with a different ethnicity, culture, religion or person, even when it comes to opposing truths and values and even when achieving consensus is not possible ("Battle for Tolma"). Sharing a unified system of values is often simply impossible. We have to agree that we cannot agree on something and build a space of communication on this ground. Levan Berdzenishvili notes that this is a space where different truths and interests coexist and where every "I" has the right to seek and establish its own truths. This is a situation where it is important not so much to compromise as to want to understand each other. Believing that there is only one truth of a single reality (enlightenment, modern discourse) must give way to a world with many realities and many truths. I accept the existence and legitimacy of other realities and truths, especially since they are as important to others as my reality and my truths are to me. The success of this type of polyphony and this type of dialogue depends

In a complex polyphony (as opposed to an imitative polyphony), different melodies (or) sounds are played at the same time. A complex polyphony means a real dialogue.

on the spiritual, intellectual and cultural level of the subjects of the dialogue and also on the level of education.

Dialogue is easily initiated by individuals who have the opportunity to ascend narrow national interests. The situation is complicated when ethnoses try to enter into dialogue with their national myths and historical memory (forgetfulness) or different religions where faith, feelings and emotions are in the foreground of a rational argument.

Dialogue within multicultural societies is also complicated by issues of belonging to different cultural artefacts, the so-called "War for Property Rights." In this "war," different types of texts, maps, food and anecdotes, among others, are used as the tools.

It is also natural that the complete incompatibility of value systems and interpretive schemes of reality makes dialogue almost impossible.

The modern world is becoming more and more polyphonic. This circumstance determines both its strength and its problematic nature. The same can be said about Georgia. Despite the problems, without polyphony, Georgian culture completely loses its originality and its ability to live. That is why it is time to start living in a polyphonic world which is multicultural and civil.

AUTHORS AND IMPORTANT FIGURES

Anderson, Benedict (1936-2015) - British political scientist and sociologist

Aprasidze, Davit - Professor of Politics, Georgia

Asatiani, Salome - (d. 1976) - Journalist, publicist

Asmmann, Jan (d. 1938) - German Egyptologist, historian of religion and culture

Barrington, Lowell - US University of Market Research, Post-Comm unist Policy and Nationalism

Blair Anthony Charles Lynton (d. 1953) - Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 1997-2007, Leader of the Labor Party (1994-2007)

Bremmer, Ian (b. 1969) - American political scientist

Cameron, David William Donald (b. 1966) - British politician, leader of the Conservative Party, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (2010-2016)

Chavchavadze, Ilia (1837-1907) - Georgian writer, poet, publicist, political and public figure

Chavchavadze, Zurab (1953-1989) - Georgian dissident, one of the leaders of the national movement in the 1980s

Chkheidze, Irakli- Assistant Professor at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Faculty of Humanities and Institute of Cultural Studies

Connie, Hans (1891-1971) - American historian, sociologist, scholar of nationalism

Cornell, Svante - Johns Hopkins University, Researcher at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies

Davitashvili, Zurab (d. 1953) - TSU Professor, Doctor of Political Science

Gamsakhurdia, Zviad (1939-1993) - Scientist, writer, translator, politician, dissident, leader of the Georgian National Liberation Movement, first President of Georgia (1991-1992)

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (1869-1948) - Indian public and state figure

Gellner, Ernest - (1925-1995) - Philosopher, anthropologist, Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge; Founder and Head of the Center for the Study of Nationalism at the Central European University in Budapest

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang (1749-1832) - German writer, thinker and statesman

Hobsbawm, Eric John Ernest (1917-2002) - British historian, researcher on nationalism

Hroch, Miroslav - Czech political scientist, Professor at the University of Prague

Hutchinson, John - (d. 1949) - British philosopher, sociologist, scholar of nationalism

Jones, Stephen - British historian, researcher of post-communist society, Eastern Europe and Georgia

Kakabadze, Irakli (d. 1969) - Writer, publicist

Khalvashi, Tamta - Anthropologist, Associate Professor at Ilia State University

Kortunov, Andrey (b. 1957) - Russian political scientist and statesman

Macharashvili, Giorgi - Ilia State University, Professor at the
    Faculty of Humanities of TSU

Macron, Emmanuel Jean-Michel Frederick (d. 1977) - French
    politician, President of France (2017-present)

Mainecke, Friedrich (1862-1954) - German historian

Maisuradze, George (d. 1970) - Writer, cultural researcher,
    Professor at Ilia State University, Director of the Institute
    for Social and Cultural Studies, publicist

Makharadze, Zura - Publicist, blogger

Mamardashvili, Merab (1930-1990) - Philosopher

Merkel, Angela Dorothea (b. 1954) - German political figure.
    Germany's first female chancellor (2005-present),
    Chairman of the Christian-Democratic Union in 2000-2018

Nodia, Gia (b. 1954) - Philosopher, publicist, Chairman of the
    Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development

Peirce, Charles (1839-1914) - American philosopher,
    mathematician, logician

Pelushi, John (d. 1956) - Metropolitan of Korçë, Albanian
    Orthodox Church

Piralishvili, Zaza (d. 1957) - Philosopher, writer, publicist

Renan, Joseph Ernest (1823-1892) - French writer, philologist
    and orientalist

Sabanadze, Natalie - Ambassador Extraordinary and
    Plenipotentiary of Georgia to the Kingdom of Belgium and
    the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Head of the Mission
    of Georgia to the European Union (since 2013), Doctor of
    Politics and International Relations

Sarkozy, Nicolas (d. 1955), French politician, President of France

(2007-2011)

Shatirishvili, Zaza (d. 1966) - Philologist, philosopher, publicist

Shoshiashvili, Nukri (d. 1955) - Historian, blogger, publicist

Smith, Anthony (d. 1939) - British scholar, researcher of nationalism

Tevzadze, Gigi (d. 1967) - Philosopher, sociologist, publicist

Vazha-Pshavela (1861-1915) - Classicist of Georgian literature

Zedania, Giga (d. 1977) - Philosopher, Rector of Ilia State University since 2014

Zhvania, Zurab (1963-2005) - Georgian politician, Prime Minister of Georgia (2004-2005)

Zolyan, Suren (d. 1955) - Writer, publicist (Armenia)

POLYETHNIC AND POLIRELIGIOUS GEORGIA
THREAT OR ADVANTAGE TO TREASURE

George Masalkin is a Researcher in the Department of Economics at the Social Research Institute and an Expert in Higher Education Programs at the Open Society Georgia Foundation. He worked as an Invited Researcher at the Faculty of Social Studies under the International Program for Faculty Development (IFDP) at New York University's New School.

He is the author of scientific articles which have appeared in international publications in the English and Russian languages.

In addition to his academic activities, Giorgi Masalkin is actively involved in public and political activities. He was elected to the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara three times. He also represented the Autonomous Republic of Adjara at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

Giorgi Masalkin